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## Consumer Well-Being: A Typology and Examination of Voluntary Simplicity

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CONSUMER WELL-BEING: A TYPOLOGY AND EXAMINATION OF VOLUNTARY  
SIMPLICITY

A Dissertation Defense  
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements  
for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree  
in the Department of Business Administration  
The University of Mississippi

by

DEREK EZELL

May 2019

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## ABSTRACT

*In the search for ways to positively influence their well-being, some consumers are turning to acts of voluntary simplicity. Ranging in magnitude, these acts involve intentional reduction of their consumption and dependency in some form. The examination of such activities on one's well-being begins with the analysis of formal interviews with tiny home owners, who take a holistic approach to voluntary simplicity, towards a framework of typical tiny home owners and discover the motivating factors for such a lifestyle choice. The second step is analyzing how these motivating factors may lead to less holistic activities surrounding voluntary simplicity and their potential to affect one's well-being. Findings show that concern for a financially secure future and one's environment are prime motivators for acts of voluntary simplicity, and that these acts do indeed improve the well-being of those engaged in the acts.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I want to thank my Lord and savior, Jesus Christ. Growing up in a loving, Christian family, and surrounding myself with such believers has given me the encouragement necessary to get through such a taxing process.

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## INTRODUCTION

“Although the connections between how people live and the ecological system are made opaque by the complexity of today's economy, the simple truth is that consumption patterns cannot continue at their current rate.” – Lim 2017

In 1971, the Board of Directors of the American Institutes for Research called a special meeting to discuss goals for the next decade of research. A top priority resulting from this meeting was an aim to increase the quality of life of Americans through various research initiatives (Flanagan 1978). Since then, research on quality of life and well-being has flourished. However, the majority of research focuses on managerial implications (Mulder et al. 2015; Tang et al. 2016; Anderson et al. 2013, 2016; Anderson and Ostrom 2015). While merited, the foundation of well-being research is still being laid with continued calls for research (Dittmar et al. 2014). Specific calls include concentrating more on the eudemonic side of well-being, dealing with the fulfillment of one's life purpose, and getting the most out of life (Deci and Ryan 2008), as well as further examination of how the marketing institution can impact consumer well-being (Sirgy et al. 2007).

While conventional wisdom assumes an increase in income can increase well-being, research has shown that this is only true in underdeveloped countries. Developed countries eventually see diminishing, or even negative, returns on well-being as income per-capita increases (Sorrell 2010). Naturally, a materialistic mindset results in not only the overconsumption of products, but also the natural resources and energy necessary to yield such

products. Recent trends away from a more materialistic lifestyle have begun to emerge in the pursuit of sustainability. Defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Berkes and Folke 1998, p.4), sustainability includes actions with the goal of increasing the economy as well as well-being simultaneously (Newman 1999). As consumers are realizing both their need to conserve resources, as well as the lack of satisfaction gained from materialism, these trends culminate in a win-win scenario for this group of consumers who not only are more satisfied with their lives, but are also consuming less in the form of natural resources.

Recent research has shown that we may be in the midst of a paradigm shift (Sirgy and Lee 2008) as consumers realize that materialism can result in lower reported self-actualization, vitality, and happiness, while reporting increased anxiety (Kasser and Ahuvia 2002) therefore making attempts to simplify their lives in effort to increase their well-being (Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002; Kasser and Ahuvia 2002). Defined as “choosing to limit material consumption in order to free one’s resources, primarily money and time, to seek satisfaction through nonmaterial aspects of life” (Huneke 2005), voluntary simplicity has emerged as a way to move away from materialism in order to increase well-being (Alexander and Ussher 2012). This voluntary simplicity is a step in the direction towards sustainability and ensuring there will be plenty of resources for future generations.

While well-being is typically closely related to one’s quality of life, consumer well-being is defined as “a desired state of objective and subjective well-being involved in the various stages of the consumer/product life cycle in relation to consumer goods” (Sirgy and Lee 2008). Researchers suggest that future research should focus more on real-world problems and

increasing the quality of life of consumers, employees, and communities (Mulder et al. 2015; Tang 2016; Anderson et al. 2013, 2016; Anderson and Ostrom 2015).

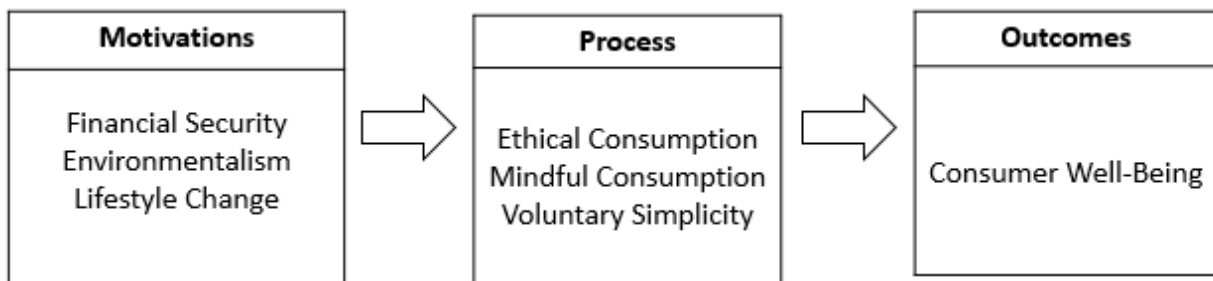
On average, families are spending approximately one third of their income on housing, and the price of home ownership continues to increase (Hutchinson 2016). Focusing on consumer well-being in the context of alternative housing, this research project includes two essays investigating the impact of anti-materialistic trends on well-being as well as how this trend may alter purchase patterns in attempt to ultimately increase well-being. Research questions answered in the subsequent essays are as follows:

1. What characteristics do minimalist home owners share as they engage in the voluntary simplicity movement?
2. How does voluntary simplicity impact consumer well-being?
3. How does voluntary simplicity affect the relationship between mindful consumption and well-being?

With consumers, industries, and other stakeholders recognizing the importance of sustainability, research on this topic is vital in order to move this discussion forward. Answering these questions will make several contributions for academicians as well as practitioners. First, for academicians, this research answers multiple calls for research in consumer well-being (Anderson et al. 2013) and sustainability (Sorell 2010). Second, this research contributes to calls for research in understanding mobilization in social movements (Van Zomeren et al. 2008), by examining mindful consumption (Sheth et al. 2011). Third, for practitioners, this research attempts to expand the foundational knowledge of how consumers, in their quest for sustainability, navigate the marketplace. These consumers are naturally going to experience changes in their consumption behaviors, and this research will give insight to those changes.

Figure 0.1 depicts the conceptual model that will guide the studies to be completed in each essay. Primarily guided by voluntary simplicity as an act of mindful consumption, two essays will attempt to answer the given research questions of the interactions between sustainable living, ethical consumption and purchase patterns, as well as their collective impact on consumer well-being. These essays will provide a theoretical perspective into voluntary simplicity, mindful consumption, sustainability, and well-being. The first of these essays is a qualitative investigation that will include interviews of individuals who live in minimalist homes, as a form of participating in the voluntary simplicity lifestyle. A typology of these home owners will be created to provide greater insights into how this lifestyle affects well-being, consumption habits as well as their social identity.

Figure 0.1: Conceptual Model of Voluntary Simplicity and Consumer Well-Being



In further attempt to examine the elements that can enhance the voluntary simplicity/well-being relationship, and based on findings and conceptual model from Essay 1, Essay 2 will quantitatively test the model via empirical examination of how voluntary simplicity impacts the relationship between environmentalism, financial security and consumer well being. Table 0.1 provides an overview and definitions of the constructs of interest in both essays.

## DEFINITIONS

Table 0.1: Key Definitions

Term	Definition (s)	Citation
Consumer Well-Being	The extent to which a particular consumer good or service creates an overall perception of the quality-of-life impact of that product	Grzeskowiak and Sirgy (2007)
	Refers to consumer satisfaction within the various consumer life subdomains	Lee et al. 2002
	A state in which consumers' experiences with goods and services are judged to be beneficial to both consumers and society at large	Sirgy and Lee 2006
Mindful Consumption	A confluence of mindful mindset, a sense of caring, and mindful behavior, a temperance of excesses	Sheth et al. 2011
	A mindset developed through awareness and attention that reflects receptivity to and engagement with the present moment, which reinforces temperance in consumption practices	Lim 2017
	involves caring about the implications and consequences of consumption and temperance in consumption behaviors	Albinsson and Perera 2012
Ethical Consumption	The conscious and deliberate choice to make certain consumption choices due to personal and moral beliefs	Crane and Matten 2003
	Influenced by environmental or ethical considerations when choosing products or services	Carrigan et al. 2004
	Decision-making, purchases and other consumption experiences that are affected by the consumer's ethical concerns	Bray et al. 2011
Sustainability	Global process of development that minimises environments resources and reduces the impact on environmental sinks using processes that simultaneously improve the economy and the quality of life	Newman 1999
	Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs	Berkes and Folke 1998
	The long term viability of living that minimises the negative impacts of demography, land use, urban form and transport on the environment	Yigitcanlar and Dur 2010
Environmentalism	Self-interest, altruism towards other humans, and altruism towards other species and the biosphere	Stern et al. 1999
	An orientation and commitment to the environment	Bannerjee et al. 2003
	Firmly links the physical environment to social change and social justice	Menon and Menon 1997



<p>Voluntary Simplicity</p>	<p>The degree to which an individual selects a lifestyle intended to maximize his/her direct control over daily activities and to minimize his/her consumption and dependency</p> <p>Resisting high consumption lifestyles and seeking, in various ways, a lower consumption but higher quality of life alternative</p> <p>Choosing to limit material consumption in order to free one's resources, primarily money and time, to seek satisfaction through nonmaterial aspects of life</p>	<p>Leonard-Barton 1981</p> <p>Alexander and Ussher 2012</p> <p>Huneke 2005</p>
<p>Social Movements</p>	<p>A set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of the society</p> <p>Involve forming mobilization potentials, forming and motivating recruitment networks, arousing motivation to participate, and removing barriers to participation</p> <p>focus primarily on why specific forms of collective identity and action appear and on their sociopolitical significance</p>	<p>McCarthy and Zald 1977</p> <p>Klandermans and Oegema 1987</p> <p>Carrol and Hacket 2006</p>
<p>Resource Mobilization</p>	<p>focuses primarily upon how movements form and engage in collective action</p> <p>a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents</p> <p>Movements of institutional change that organize previously unorganized groups against institutional elites</p>	<p>Carrol and Hacket 2006</p> <p>McCarthy and Zald 1977</p> <p>Jenkins 1983</p>

## ESSAY 1

### TOWARDS VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY: AN EXAMINATION OF THE MINIMALIST HOME MOVEMENT

People have uttered the phrase “money can’t buy you happiness” for quite some time. While this saying is true at face value, using your money in different ways can have strong impacts on your happiness. While a majority of people attempt to “buy” this happiness with a materialistic approach to life, others are beginning to see the pitfalls of materialism. This materialism has resulted in lower reported self-actualization, vitality, and happiness, while reporting increased anxiety (Kasser and Ahuvia 2002). In a review of literature examining the link between materialism and life satisfaction, Burroughs and Rindfleisch (2002) found 19 studies further explaining the negative impacts of materialism on one’s well-being, and a meta-analysis of 258 publications showed a “clear, consistent negative association between a broad array of types of personal well-being and people’s belief in and prioritization of materialistic pursuits in life” (Dittmar et al. 2014, p. 918).

Fortunately for consumers, recent research has shown that we may be in the midst of a paradigm shift (Sirgy and Lee 2008) as consumers realize how minimalizing their lives can increase their well-being (Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002; Kasser and Ahuvia 2002). Again this is dissimilar to past thought processes that having larger houses etc. would make one happier and more fulfilled. This shift away from a materialistic lifestyle towards a voluntary simplistic one

that is “outwardly simple and inwardly rich” (Elgin and Mitchell 1977; p. 2) raises a few questions of importance to marketers in attempt to better understand the relationship between materialism and well-being.

Minimalist living or more commonly known as tiny homes are appearing all over the world as a way to reduce one’s consumption, and increase the enjoyment one receives from life. According to a 2010 census, the average size of a house in the United States had risen to 2,392 square feet (census.gov 2010). To be considered a ‘tiny home’ the dwelling unit cannot exceed 500 square feet. Tiny homes are a holistic approach to voluntary simplicity, as they require individuals to reduce their possessions in order to comfortably live in such a small space. In answering a recent call concerning changes in materialism and the impact on consumer well-being (Dittmar et al. 2014), this research asks three main questions:

1. What are the motivations behind the tiny house movement?
2. What impact does this lifestyle change have on well-being?
3. What shared characteristics are exhibited by those engaged in this movement?

By answering these questions, marketers will gain a better understanding of the mindset of consumers involved in voluntary simplicity. This understanding will allow marketers to better reach these consumers, and ultimately aid in their search for consumer well-being. This research will seek to answer these questions via in-depth interviews with consumers involved in this new lifestyle, as they navigate the marketplace with a new mentality. A typology of tiny home owners will be generated as they exhibit a simpler lifestyle in hopes to achieve increased well-being.

In attempt to answer these research questions, this essay will examine how choosing to live in a tiny home affects the lives of their inhabitants. While well-being research has become

increasingly popular, multiple authors continue to call for additional research as understanding of the topic grows (Sirgy et al. 2007; Deci and Ryan 2008; Anderson et al. 2013). Specifically, a call has been made to better understand the relationship between marketing and quality of life (Deci and Ryan 2008). This essay aims to build upon foundational research in well-being by asking those straying from the norm of a materialistic viewpoint of housing about their motivations as well as possible impacts on their well-being.

## SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Social movements have been a large part of society in the United States dating back to when it became an independent nation following the Revolutionary War. Stemming from dissatisfaction with current situations and possibly hostile environments, social movements exist as a way to affect change resulting from these situations. While some social movements can be hostile (e.g. Civil War), others can still be impactful through peaceful demonstration (e.g. Martin Luther King). As social movements have been a large part of the development as well as the appeal of the United States, these movements have become a common way to express discontentment involving important issues (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996).

The *social* aspect of social movements involves a grouping of people who come together to enact change in their environment. This is typically explained by the prevalent social psychology theory of collective action. The theory of collective action is based on the idea that individuals would not join or participate in a group based on their own self-interest, but rather join based on the assumption that each member would both act and benefit as a group (Olson 1965; Ostrom 2000).

Dealing more with the dynamics and tactics used in social movements on more of a general level, the *movement* aspect of these social movements is typically explained through the resource mobilization theory. Defined as “a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of a social structure and/or reward distribution of a society (McCarthy and Zald 1977, p. 1217-1218)”, this theory includes societal support and posits that the success of social movements heavily relies on the ability of that group to properly integrate existing resources and external support. While this theory mainly describes the *movement* aspect in discussing the mobilization of resources, it also helps to explain the *social* aspect in that the merging of resources from individuals to form a collective group or social movement organization can increase the power of that movement.

#### RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

Resource mobilization theory relies on multiple premises. Individuals do not typically have the resources, nor are they as impactful as an individual. Therefore, resource aggregation is characteristically an antecedent to social movements, as summative resources from the individuals of a group allow for meaningful activities. Combining these resources naturally assists with the organization of that group, but assistance outside the movement group is vital to the potential success or failure of that movement. One of the most important resources in the mobilization of social movements is public support (Stern et al. 1999). Highly structured groups are more likely to officially become social movement organizations (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Participation is also a major influencer of the success of social movements. McCarthy and Zald (1977) suggest that those heavily involved in social movements place an importance on recruitment as a tactic to increase participation in the movement.

While social movements can be an effective way to illicit change in one's environment, not all situations will spawn a movement. Included in these movements is a great deal of effort, stress, coordination, and willingness to face adversity. Therefore, in order for someone to make the decision to take on the difficulties of social movements, there needs to be some justifiable motivations for this movement. Whether the movements derive from social injustice or strongly held beliefs about a particular situation, these motivations can come in various forms. For the purposes of this research, social phenomena inspiring social movements include sustainability, environmentalism, anti-materialism, and well-being

## MATERIALISM

Cultural norms in America tend to promote materialism as a way to increase satisfaction. Materialism is generally referred to as the importance consumers place on the attainment of worldly possessions (Belk 1984). The accumulation of products can be seen as a statement on one's success in life and in their career. Satisfaction with these purchases is of great importance to marketers in building long-term relationships with customers, and satisfaction within the consumer domain has shown to be an important factor in one's overall life satisfaction (Lee et al. 2002). At the highest levels, those who prescribe to materialism believe it has strong, positive impacts on satisfaction (Belk 1984). However, materialism has been shown to have a negative impact on this life satisfaction (Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002) as consumers associated with a high level of materialism report lower vitality, happiness, self-actualization, as well as higher levels of anxiety (Kasser and Ahuvia 2002). In a similar manner, consumers placing low importance on materialistic values reported higher well-being and psychological health (Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002; Kasser and Ahuvia 2002).

With the core premise of materialism being the placement of high importance of one's possessions (Belk 1984, Nepomuceno and Laroche 2017), marketers have been known to encourage materialism, driving consumers to purchase more products so that sales will increase (Nepomuceno and Laroche 2017). This creates conflicting goals between organizations and consumers as consumers may attempt to reduce consumption due to the adverse effect of consumption on well-being (Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002). A remedy for this conflict in goals lies in the concept of self-control and long-term orientation (Nepomuceno and Laroche 2017). This means that consumers can use self-control to make smaller purchases in effort to achieve their more important long-term materialistic goals. This self-control and long-term orientation has been shown to enhance well-being for individuals (Nepomuceno and Laroche 2017). One such long-term goal is consumers' increasing concern for mindful consumption to preserve the environment for future generations (Sheth et al. 2011).

## MINDFUL CONSUMPTION

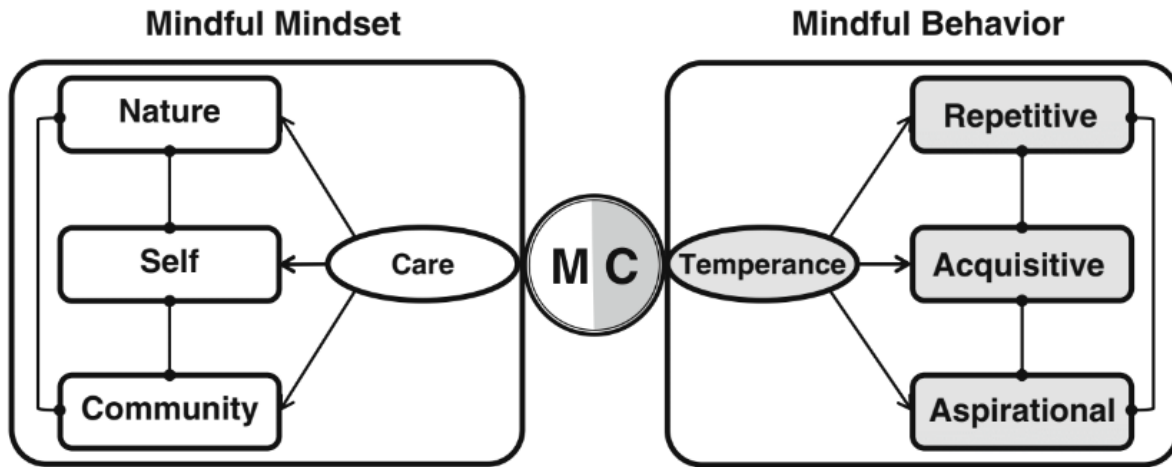
While noting the difficulty of defining 'ethical consumption' due to the vast amount of activities included, Crane and Matten (2003) attempt to define ethical consumption as "the conscious and deliberate choice to make certain consumption choices due to personal and moral beliefs". This suggests that consumers choose to either purchase or not to purchase an item based on their personal beliefs/morals. One's self-identity is a key influencer of their ethical consumption, as well as their collective identity if involved with a group (Cherrier 2007), such as a social movement. Likewise, individuals tend to categorize themselves with certain groups that can help them in forming their own self-identity (Ashforth and Mael 1989). While these identities can be a strong indicator of one's likelihood to consume ethically, cynicism can cause some consumers to question their individual impact from consuming ethically (Bray et al. 2011).

As discussed previously, belongingness to a group can influence many factors of one's life, including their well-being and their ethical consumption. Studies have shown that the well-being of consumers is influenced by the group they are involved in (Grzeskowiak and Sirgy 2007), and their ethical consumption lifestyles are also influenced by these groups (Papaoikonomou et al. 2012) and the collective identities associated with this group (Cherrier 2007). Social movements can also create a group that can influence the ethical consumption of individuals as they desire to be associated with such a movement (Sebastiani et al. 2013).

Defined as a temperance in consumption guided by a set of concerns, mindful consumption has been discussed in the literature as the guiding approach to sustainability from the customer viewpoint (Sheth et al. 2011). Comprised of attitudinal and behavioral components, this customer-centric approach to sustainability is a useful starting point to understand social movements. Three aspects guide mindful mindset: nature, self, and community. Whereas mindful behavior manifests itself in the form of temperance, in which consumers temper their consumption. This temperance comes in three main forms: repetitive, acquisitive, and aspirational (Sheth et al. 2011).



Figure 1.1: Mindful Consumption Model



\*Sheth, J. N., Sethia, N. K., & Srinivas, S. (2011). Mindful consumption: a customer-centric approach to sustainability. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 39(1), 21-39.

Mindful consumption as developed by Sheth et al (2011) set the stage for a research stream that focuses on reducing the gap between consumer and organizational goals. This theoretical foundation is the basis for the recent focus on sustainability in the marketing literature. As seen in figure 1.3, sustainability transfers into environmental, ethical, and social responsibilities for the individual (Lim 2017).

### VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

One recent movement is a result of this paradigm shift towards minimization resulting in an increase of their overall life satisfaction. With well-being representing the overall life satisfaction one may have, satisfaction within the consumer domain has been shown to be an important factor of life satisfaction (Lee et al. 2002). This consumer well-being is also highly influenced by community belongingness (Grzeskowiak and Sirgy 2007). Voluntary simplicity is seen as a social movement as some people look for ways to shift away from the negative impacts

of materialism (Alexander and Ussher 2012). Some are looking more into the idea of a tiny house, typically defined as a living quarters that is confined to less than five hundred square feet (Hutchinson 2016). These tiny homes can serve multiple purposes for the owners, including being involved in that community feeling, as well as decreasing their financial strain, resulting in an increase in overall life satisfaction.

His article cited nearly twenty-five thousand times, Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow 1943) is a widely used and discussed concept in marketing. Products purchased can meet any of these needs, and in some cases, multiple needs. Marketing researchers typically associate shelter with the most basic need, the physiological need (Benson and Dundis 2003; Oleson 2004). However, many consumers seem to treat it as an esteem need as their home projects a sense of accomplishment and prestige (Maslow 1943) with families spending approximately one third of their income on housing (Hutchinson 2016). This leaves two-thirds a household's income to purchase all other needs in the hierarchy including savings for security purposes. Therefore, the ability to spend less on a house would leave the household with more discretionary income to be able to fulfill the other needs and save for their future comfortably. With various forms of anti-consumption growing in popularity due to the negative relationship between materialism and well-being, some consumers have begun to reduce their spending on their homes without compromising on modern amenities through efficient home design. While there can be many forms of voluntarily simplifying one's life, simplifying one's home is a more holistic approach to simplicity.

## TINY HOME MOVEMENT

Lower bills in the form of mortgage, electricity, and home owner's insurance allow the owners to have more discretionary income to spend on other things. However, the size of their home is going to limit the type of products in which they can purchase, because they will not be able to store the amount of belongings that people in a typical sized house would be able to. This means that the majority of tangible items purchased by tiny house owners will need to be utilitarian products, with little room for hedonic products. If they are able to find a product that could fill the role of hedonic and utilitarian, this product would likely be ideal.

Communities of tiny houses are already beginning to form. As stated previously, having a sense of community has been shown to result in higher consumer well-being (Grzeskowiak and Sirgy 2007). This will not only increase their well-being due to the community, but also due to the anti-materialism associated with tiny homes (Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002). Although some of these communities are formed by home owners moving to be closer to people who have similar interests, some of these communities are being formed as a way to give back to communities. For example, some groups have begun constructing tiny home communities for the homeless to live in, while others are being built for former military who may be disabled, or find it difficult to make the transition back to work after being in service. This is resulting from the recognition of increased well-being due to the anti-materialism, and spreading this well-being to those in need.

Although these tiny homes can be built on foundations as a permanent structure, they are typically built on a trailer, as a camper would be, for mobility. Also, building the houses on a trailer allows for the builders to abide by different building codes than those being built on a foundation. Public policy does not currently identify structures built on a mobile structure as a

“house”. In some cities, a newly constructed house must be over a particular square feet (usually five hundred) to qualify for the local building permits necessary to begin construction. Building a structure on wheels allows home owners to get around this restriction. Although this does lessen some of the restrictions during the building process, there are restrictions for pulling sizeable structures on the road. Current road restrictions state that the structure cannot exceed thirteen and a half feet tall, and eight feet wide. This is to ensure the safe travel of the structure as most traffic lights, bridges, and trees are just above this threshold. Buildings that exceed these restrictions must apply for a permit to transport the building as a “wide load”, which includes an escort.

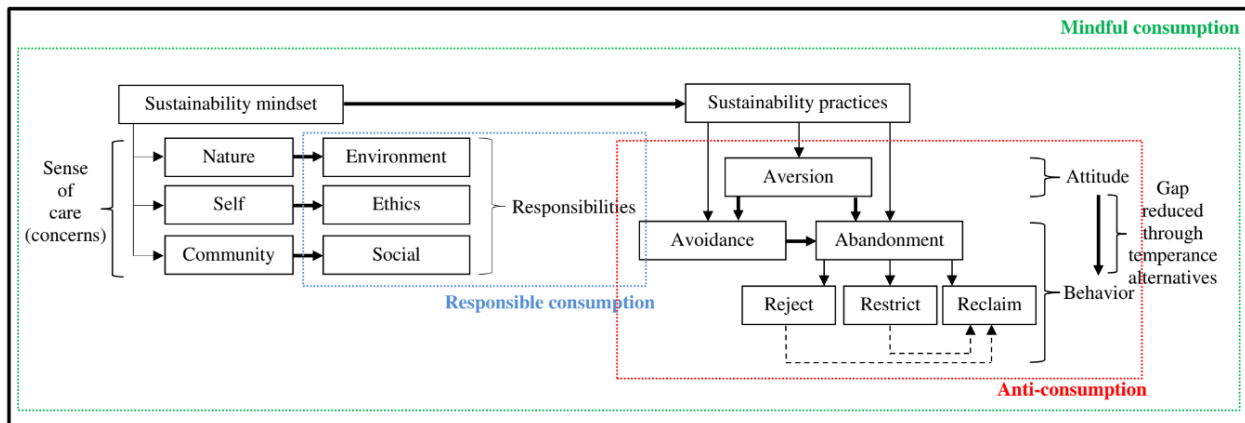
## SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

In recognizing the importance of this issue The United States government created the Office of Federal Sustainability in 1993 (OFS Website). Tasked with creating regulations concerning sustainability, this office has created numerous statutes. While many policies are normative in nature, a recent policy was created to make the operations within the government more sustainable. With the U.S. government being the largest energy consumer in the nation, this was a choice to lead by example.

Citing stakeholder theory and corporate social responsibility, Sharma and Henriques (2005) say that businesses should create objectives that consider sustainability. This could be accomplished through the creation of tangible stakeholder interests inspired by intangible social and environmental issues. Although it may help, this does not mean that a decrease in consumption is necessary to create sustainability. Trade can be either good or bad for sustainability, depending on a number of variables. However, some believe that trade may be the best way to bring economic welfare and global sustainability together in the long run (Van den

Bergh and Verbruggen 1999). This would lead to an increase of awareness by organizations of how their decisions impact the global sustainability mission, and not necessarily a decrease in production. Industries, such as the construction industry, have already taken charge by finding ways to reduce the impact of their operations on environment to improve social and economic factors (Ortiz et al. 2009).

Figure 1.2: Integrated model for sustainable consumption



\* Lim, W. M. (2017). Inside the sustainable consumption theoretical toolbox: Critical concepts for sustainability, consumption, and marketing. *Journal of Business Research*, 78, 69-80.

As Lim (2017) noted, multiple national organizations, as well as scholarly authors, have shifted their focus towards sustainability noting that current consumption practices will not be sustainable in the long-term. With sustainability and concerns for the environment growing in the minds of consumers, voluntary simplicity in the form of sustainable living may satisfy these concerns. Tiny homes are a way to reduce one’s ecological footprint, and provide a more sustainable lifestyle that is conducive to the environment. There are even ranges of sustainability within the tiny house movement. Some of these homes are made to be “off-grid” to where the homes are self-reliant with composting toilets, solar panels (if there is any electricity at all), and

rain catchment systems. Tiny homes can have any combination of these features in efforts to achieve varying levels of sustainability.

## CONSUMER WELL-BEING

Figure 1.3: Partial Formula for Well-Being

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### **Partial Formula for High Well-Being**

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- Live in a democratic and stable society that provides material resources to meet needs
- Have supportive friends and family
- Have rewarding and engaging work and an adequate income
- Be reasonably healthy and have treatment available in case of mental problems
- Have important goals related to one's values
- Have a philosophy or religion that provides guidance, purpose, and meaning to one's life

*\*Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. (2004). Beyond money: Toward an economy of well-being. Psychological science in the public interest, 5(1), 1-31.*

In attempt to create national well-being index, Diener and Seligman (2004) compile a list of six keys to having high well-being. As can be seen in figure 1.1, the first deals with living in a society with enough materials resources to meet one's needs. While this may seem to advocate a materialistic lifestyle on the surface, it is not necessarily the case. Underdeveloped countries can have higher levels of well-being due to the simplicity in which they live. Reiterating the negative relationship between materialism and well-being, this first point states that the society must meet a minimum level of materials necessary to sustain a good life. The third key includes a sufficient income level. With Americans spending an estimated one third of their income on housing, and the price of home ownership continues to increase (Hutchinson 2016), it may be difficult to increase one's income enough to sustain this amount of spending. To do so may include more hours at work, and less time doing more enjoyable activities such as hobbies and spending time

with loved ones. The fourth point involves a reasonable level of health, including mental health. While the voluntary simplicity and tiny house movement may not explicitly help with the other three keys to a high well-being, these movements can help with these. A more simplistic lifestyle would allow for sufficient income levels, less materials needed, and an increase in mental health via well-being.

### RESTRUCTURING OF RESOURCES

While environmental and anti-materialism motives for engaging in voluntary simplicity are noble causes, some may be motivated for financial reasons. People who see that they are working long hours to ensure they can keep their expensive house and cars may realize that they are left with little for other things they enjoy. Realizing this, a tiny house could be seen as an option that would free up more money for additional things such as vacations, sporting events, concerts, and spending more time with family due to the ability to earn enough money to sustain a simpler lifestyle with fewer labor hours. This is being labelled as the restructuring of resources as these individuals take resources previously used on their expensive house, and use them for other things to bring them joy, possibly more hedonic products.

The possibility exists that there are multiple other examples of motivating factors for the simplistic lifestyles that would ideally be uncovered in this study. Any motivating factor for voluntary simplicity, or combination of factors, would be in attempt to increase their well-being, and feel as though they are getting more fulfillment from their lives. Figure 1.4 represents the expected results in examining the motivations for engaging in voluntary simplicity.

Figure 1.4: Anticipated Motivations for Voluntary Simplicity

Anticipated Motivations for Voluntary Simplicity
Anti-Materialism
Sustainability
Restructuring of Resources

This study allows for a better understanding of the decision to engage in this social movement as well as how their life as a consumer has been altered due to this decision. Thirty-one tiny home owners were recruited from a group found on a popular social media platform. Members of this group consist of tiny homeowners as well as people interested in tiny homes. Tiny homeowners use this group as a way to share their life experiences and answer questions others may have about tiny homes. Many of these tiny homeowners build the houses on their own with little outside help. Those interested in tiny homes use this group to gain a better idea of tiny home life, and gather more information before deciding if this life is for them or not. They also utilize the knowledge of the tiny home owners in answering various questions they may have about what it takes to build, own, and maintain a tiny home.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

Given that I have currently lived in a tiny house for nearly two years, this allows for a unique perspective and opportunity to approach analysis from an ethnographic viewpoint. Ethnographies are often used to understand the culture of a group of people, and include sustained engagement. This long-term immersion into the culture allows the researcher to better understand interactions within the group as well as the meanings of those interactions. Coding of responses will take a “general inductive approach.” This strategy has been termed as analytic



induction by some authors (Bryman & Burgess 1994). Inductive analysis is an approach to data collection that utilizes detailed reading of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or models through interpretation of the raw data by a researcher (Thomas 2006). The purpose of the inductive approach is to allow research findings to emerge from frequent or significant themes in the data and can lead to discovery of unplanned or unanticipated effects (Thomas 2006). The inductive analysis of the interviews usually follows the “3 C’s of analysis” approach outlined by Lichtman (2006). The three C’s are comprised of Coding, Categories, and Concepts (also known as Themes). Using this method, researchers code the data to identify important information and determine relationships among the codes. These related codes are then organized into categories to reduce redundancy and identification of important components. The categories are then organized into concepts or themes that are prominent in the analysis.

This method of inductive analysis was followed since it allows the researcher to ask participants questions that will allow them to understand the “lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (2006 p.9), which pairs well with the ethnographic approach in understanding the everyday lives of this culture from within. Rossman and Rallis (2003) would refer to the type of interview conducted as a standardized open-ended interview which is “tightly prefigured, having fixed questions that are asked of all participants in a particular order” (p.182). Thomas (2006) notes the primary objective of inductive reasoning is to “allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies” (p.238).

A 3-step process was utilized for data analysis. The steps consisted of the following: (a) reading the narrative and identifying important elements called codes. (b) Grouping the similar codes into important categories (c) identifying commonalities and unique themes or variations

from those categories. Two different individuals read each transcript several times to identify important elements who then independently coded each statement if it was found to be an important contribution towards the research, resulting in 460 individual codes. Each individual's interview was coded in a new column of excel to keep the interviewers unique. Once coded, these codes were revisited repeatedly to group them into categories. These categories were then again visited and similar elements were grouped, and tentative theme names were assigned. As data analysis progressed, similar themes were combined resulting in overarching themes for each question.

## RESULTS

Table 1.1 summarizes the respondent characteristics. What follows is a discussion of the respondents' insights from the in-depth interviews organized by question.

Table 1.1: Overview of Interview Respondent Characteristics

	Average	Minimum	Maximum	%
Length of Time Spent in TH (months)	28.83	2	90	
Size of Previous Home (sq. ft.)	228	200	2750	
Size of TH (sq. ft.)	1590	125	400	
<i>Do you live in a community or are you secluded?</i>				
Community Living				42
Seclusion				58
<i>How long do you intend on living in a tiny home?</i>				
Forever				53
<5 Years				26
>5 Years				21
<i>How do you see the tiny home movement?</i>				
Fad				0
Niche				32
Paradigm Shift				42
All				26

Table 1.2: Qualitative Results for Interviews with Tiny Home Owners

Question	Theme	N/%	Illustrative Quote
Why did you choose to live in a tiny house rather than other	Financial Security	21/68%	"A great way to live below out means and save money for travel and future potential needs"
	Simplify	12/39%	"I was interested in living a simpler life with less" "I hate having stuff in my house I don't need, so doing a tiny house forces you to get rid of things"
	Flexibility	11/35%	"We liked the idea of having a mobile option" "...which helped in the flexibility of the lifestyle"
How has your life changed as a result of living in a tiny house?	Financial Stability	19/62%	"I am proud of my financial freedom. I did it!" "I am out of debt"
	Freedom in Life	14/45%	"I find I live much more deliberately and thoughtfully" "I'm healthier, my life isn't as negatively impacted or controlled by others"
	Food for the Soul	12/39%	"I'm really only four to six feet from nature in any direction, which feeds my soul and creativity as an artist"
What are some challenges of living in a tiny house?	Adapting	24/77%	"If you do get sad or depressed, there's no other place to go" "Having to decide what to keep and what to donate"
	Repairs	14/45%	"finding people that are willing to work on them when something goes wrong" "Maintenance, the tiny is too small for most repairmen (think plumber in tiny space)"
	Social Outcast	12/39%	"Friends didn't 'get it' and still don't" "there's a lot of stigma that goes along with the lifestyle as well"
If you could change one thing about living in a tiny house, what would it be?	Small Changes	16/52%	"Since I designed it, there isn't really much. The washer dryer makes the bathroom warm, so better ventilation for that would be nice"
	Regulation	7/23%	"I'd change the restrictive laws around building tiny houses. I still feel that the government has too much control over how people choose to live"
	Nothing	8/26%	"I don't think I can think of anything I'd change at this point, I am so in love with the process and the experience and the house"

*Question 1: Why did you choose to live in a tiny house rather than other living situations?*

When choosing where to live, there is not a voluminous amount of options, and social norms dwindle those options even further. With tiny homes being a new concept, and not fully accepted into society yet, this question was asked with the main goal of obtaining the specific

reasons each individual decided to make the choice to live in a tiny home. While specific answers varied, some commonalities kept revealing themselves in the interviews. The largest communal theme to this question revolved around financial security. This obviously includes the notion that tiny homes tend to be more affordable overall than traditional homes due to the lower amount of living area, even though tiny houses tend to demand a higher price per square foot. Also included in this reoccurring theme was the ease with which these individuals could fully own their house. Where a typical home mortgage may be in the range of 30 years, tiny home owners often find themselves without a mortgage given the low price tag accompanying many tiny homes. Others spoke to how the low costs associated with tiny home living affords them other luxuries such as travel and the ability to live a debt-free life.

*Question 2: What other living situations did you consider?*

This question was asked hoping to uncover the amount of options each person had and their level of consideration for those choices. As stated earlier, choosing a living situation inherently has a limited number of choices, and many things can determine the number of choices one may have. While most mentioned the fact that a traditional house was a consideration, they were looking to break the social norm of buying a typical house due to the burden that comes along with buying a house. Throughout the interviews, multiple participants mentioned the difficulties of owning a traditional house. Traditional houses have large mortgages that last around 30 years, and some feel as if they have to work long hours just to stay on top of their mortgage payment as well as utilities. In addition, the larger space that accompanies a traditional house requires more time to clean and upkeep than a tiny house. Other considerations in the decision of where to live included alternatives to a traditional house that were similar to a tiny house. Some looked at small apartments, while others looked at recreational vehicles,

mobile homes, or houseboats. However, a large part of participants had their mind set on a tiny house as a solution to their housing issues, and admitted to giving little consideration to any other option.

*Question 3: How did you find out about tiny houses?*

In order to choose the tiny house lifestyle to escape the typical living situation, these individuals had to learn of this concept from somewhere. This question looks to uncover the origin of the knowledge of existence for tiny houses. These individuals had learned about tiny houses as an alternative housing option in three ways: television, family/friends, and self-research. Some of these individuals stumbled across the concept while watching their favorite channel on television. This idea piqued their curiosity and drove them to learn more about this lifestyle and their own potential for living this way. Others either heard from family, or had met someone who had experience with this lifestyle. Seeing people they knew and cared about share the benefits and joy they felt from this lifestyle led to their interest in choosing the same lifestyle for themselves. A smaller contingent of participants mentioned that they were just tired of the typical home ownership, and went out looking for alternatives on their own. This self-research led them to the concept of tiny homes, and ultimately their decision to choose such a lifestyle.

*Question 4: Who/What influenced you to live in a tiny house?*

Choosing a place to live is a very important decision for everyone and making the decision to go against societal norms into a housing market that has yet to see much regulation due to its novelty complicates this decision even further. While the previous question dealt with how these individuals learned about this concept, this question was posed with the intent of discovering the main influence in their decision to engage in this lifestyle. This question was met

with a wide variety of responses, most of which were similar to those from the first question. A large amount of individuals spoke to the financial benefits of living in a tiny home, whether it be to lower daily expenses or to have more discretionary income for other things that were important to them such as travel. Some were convinced because of the environmental benefits of such a lifestyle. This allowed for a smaller carbon footprint, thus positively affecting the environment. Those who were already living in tiny homes inspired others and the positive impact such a lifestyle was currently having on them. The rest were desiring a simplified lifestyle that demanded less time working and maintaining a typical house, and afforded them more time to things that brought them joy (e.g. spending time with family, outdoors, with friends, more spare time).

*Question 5: How involved were you in the building process?*

Anecdotal evidence from being a part of the tiny house group on social media suggested that tiny home owners tend to be more heavily involved in the building process of their home when compared to those who own a traditional home. Many go as far as building the entire home on their own without any professional help. This question aimed to get a clearer picture of this by directly asking the level of involvement. Two of the respondents admitted that they had no involvement by them in the building process. Their journey to becoming a tiny home owner began when they purchased a home that was originally built for another owner. However, all of the other respondents spoke to having more involvement in the building process. Those on the lower end of involvement talked about how they had a professional build it, but they had a great deal of input on design, layout, and features. This is not dissimilar to those who hire a professional builder to build a standard-sized house for them.

A majority of these individuals discussed their personal ability to build the house in its entirety, with little to no outsourcing of labor. There are two reasons that seem to be at the forefront of reasoning behind self-built homes in this market. First, the level of customization that is almost necessary to ensure that the most important aspects of the home are incorporated to each individual's set of priorities, and so the home is suited to their specific needs. Each person has a set of items they can sacrifice as well as a set of home features they feel are a necessity. Second is notion of expense. Given that a large portion of this market chooses living in a tiny home for financial reasons, paying a professional would add to the financial burden. Often times, the ability to complete the building process on their own can cut the costs of building in half. Therefore, in their minds, hiring someone to build for them is an unnecessary cost that cuts into their ability to save money for other things.

*Question 6: How has your life changed as a result of living in a tiny house?*

This project began with an assertion that people must be choosing this lifestyle because there is some well-being benefit in such a life. This question was asked to see if this was indeed the case, and was put in a way that would hopefully get at the changes without asking a leading question. Three main themes presented themselves within their answers. The first revolved around the financial benefit of living in such a way. These people chose this lifestyle hoping to secure a financial future for themselves and their offspring, and have now discovered that this lifestyle does indeed provide such a sense of financial security. Most people in this category spoke to the joy and relief felt as their lifestyle choice had allowed them to achieve freedom from debt, a task that is much more difficult for most who choose a traditional home. One even mentioned how their infatuation with tiny homes had led to a job in which they discuss the



benefits with others who are interested in this lifestyle, as well as working with them to design a home that will meet their needs.

Another contingency discussed the freedom they felt in life by such a lifestyle choice. Not only the relief of pressure to work long hours to support a typical mortgage, but the reduced amount of upkeep associated with tiny homes has afforded these owners more free time. Some use this free time to take up hobbies, visit friends or family, others use it to travel more, or spend more time outdoors.

The last theme found in answers to this question centers around a feeling of calmness and peace from this lifestyle. Respondents spoke about how they feel less tired, calm, comfortable, happier, healthier, proud, and a peace of mind as if living in a tiny home feeds their soul. One even said they felt a clearer picture of who they are as an individual as well as what they want to get out of life. The process of prioritizing your belongings and dwindling them down to only keeping those things that are most important to you, can be somewhat cathartic and make you take perspective on who you are and who you would like to be seen as.

*Question 7: What are some challenges to living in a tiny house?*

These interviews were done knowing that such a lifestyle has to have some drawbacks, or everyone would be choosing it. This question aims to reveal these drawbacks. While answers ranged, there was some consensus on particular issues. One of the biggest hurdles in this lifestyle is the process of adapting. Living in a tiny home means constantly being in close quarters with everyone in the household, which creates some obvious challenges. Some mentioned the difficulty in finding privacy in such a small space, including a place to get away for time to themselves and even privacy while using the facilities.

All three of the other themes revolved around the newness of tiny homes creating difficulties. This newness means that governing bodies are not quite sure how to regulate this market. Therefore, there is a wide variety of policies on tiny homes, and some markets do not allow such homes or restrict them heavily. This creates obvious challenges when deciding where to place this home. Multiple respondents voiced their frustration with the government and felt as if they were almost coerced to go back to a typical home or rental. This newness also creates difficulties when repairs are necessary, and people look to hire out this work. Repairmen are not familiar with tiny homes, which may deter some from agreeing to work on them. The last difficulty mentioned deals with the societal norm of what type of housing one should choose. These individuals have gone against that societal norm and have gotten pushback from that society, with some having their decision questioned by those who are close to them. Words like stigma, outcast, and crazy were mentioned when discussing this decision as an opposition to societal norms.

*Question 8: What are some benefits to living in a tiny home?*

While this question saw similar results to the first question, this one was asked with the intent of revealing any benefits discovered in this lifestyle after living in the house for an extended period that were not initial motivators for making this decision. Answers that were new included how organized the house ended up being due to necessity, more opportunities for experiences, being outdoors more, and the pride in lowering their carbon footprint.

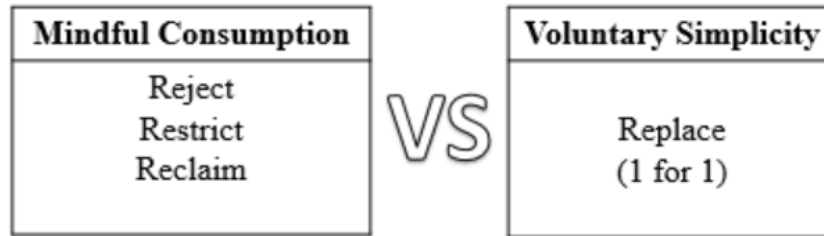
*Question 9: How have your purchasing habits changed by living in a tiny house?*

This question had multiple parts, and was intended to see just how much their life as consumers had changed due to this lifestyle change. Many admitted the inability to buy in bulk,

often requiring more frequent trips to the grocery store. Living in a smaller space obviously forces one to make more thoughtful purchasing decisions, and many acknowledged the fact that they had become much more intentional in their shopping decisions due to their alternative living situation.

This question had a few follow-up questions with specifics about their consumption alterations. Following assertions made by Lim (2017), it was assumed that consumers employing voluntary simplicity though tiny houses would reject, restrict, and/or reclaim in some form. While some respondents mentioned slight forms of these actions, most claimed to see very little change in their consumption habits as a result of this simplistic lifestyle. They saw themselves as living more simple as consumers, and living in a tiny home was just another example of this simplistic form of consumption. Figure 1.8 shows the difference between expected results and those obtained from the interviews. The largest change in consumption seemed to be in their mindset when deciding whether to purchase. Most admitted that the acquisition of a product while living simple usually means replacing an existing item in their house. With little room for extra items, replacing old items with new ones was the only logical way to obtain products of interest without cluttering their lives. This would suggest that while a mindful consumption lifestyle would include rejecting, restricting, or reclaiming items, a voluntarily simplistic lifestyle may require replacing items.

Figure 1.5: Anticipated versus Actual Temperance Activities



*Question 10: If you could change one thing about living in a tiny home, what would it be?*

While previous questions uncovered benefits and difficulties of this living situation, this question targets specific changes that would be made to their living situation. Three main themes arose in the answers to this question. The first was a consistent theme of making small alterations to their home in order for it to better suit them. While most who live in a tiny home help with the design of the home and deciding which features it should have and not have, it is extremely difficult to know with certainty until one has lived in such a space for a given time. There were multiple examples of individuals who thought they could live without a feature/appliance only to find life difficult once they moved in. Similarly, there were examples of those who thought a specific feature was necessary and moved in only to find out that it wasn't such a necessity, and that feature was now taking up valuable space that could have featured another aspect that had been omitted. However, approximately half of respondents claimed they would make no changes to their home.

The other theme that kept presenting itself was the desired change to regulation. As mentioned previously, tiny homes are new to many people making regulation difficult. Anecdotal evidence suggests that those who live in typical housing neighborhoods do not like the

idea of tiny homes residing in their neighborhoods for fear of the reduction of value in their own home. Therefore, most pieces of land designated for residential properties do not allow tiny homes to be placed there.

## DISCUSSION

After interviewing owners of tiny homes about their motivations and how their lives had changed, the researcher found that these individuals can be categorized into one of four classifications based on two main components. The first component considered in the classification is their primary motivation. Either individuals seemed to be motivated by resources, or by some personal goals they hoped to achieve by changing their lifestyle in such a drastic way. Once their primary motivation has been considered, an examination of their level of individualism will determine their final placement in the matrix model.

Figure 1.6: Conceptual Framework of Tiny Home Owners

	Individualistic	Collectivist
Motivated by Resources	Frugals	Environmentalists
Motivated by Personal Goals	Autonomy Seekers	Community

Those in the top left quadrant are being labeled as ‘Frugals’ due to their motivation by resources and having an individualistic viewpoint. This is the individual who decides to move into a tiny home to secure a financial future that is worry-free, and sees tiny home ownership as more easily attainable than ownership of a typical home. Respondents in this category said things like “for me it is a step towards securing a rent free future”, “I wanted to get out of debt, I had 30K in student loan debt”, and “the idea of purchasing an average size home and taking on a mortgage is absolutely terrifying to me”.

Those in the top right quadrant are labelled as ‘Environmentalists’, again due to their concern for resources. However, they differ in that their concern is for the environment, which is an inherently collectivist perspective considering they share these environmental resources with others. Responses from ‘Environmentalists’ include: “I wanted to start living sustainably, wasting as little resources as possible”, “using less resources, becoming more eco-conscious”, and “while designing my sustainable lifestyle, I set myself the challenge to design/build a non-toxic, off-grid solar tiny home on wheels that met my needs”. While resources motivated these individuals, they were motivated by resources that were shared with others, choosing a lifestyle that ensures they do not spend more of these resources than are needed.

Respondents in the bottom left quadrant are characterized by their personal motivation. Labeled ‘Autonomy Seekers’, these individuals were looking for a flexible lifestyle, and it was important to them to be a large part (if not the whole part) of the design and building of the house. They wanted to be in control of their lives, breaking social norms and not letting society tell them how they are supposed to live. They also enjoyed the ability to pick up and move at any given moment. These responses included: “we loved the idea of being able to customize every

detail of our living space”, “freedom to design for me”, “we chose to live in a tiny home to travel with our home”.

The last quadrant includes individuals motivated by their personal goal to become part of a community. The tiny house community is a growing population, and anecdotal evidence suggests that this population shows a high willingness to answer questions anyone may have about this market, as well as help other with their building and transition into this lifestyle. These individuals stated: “we have a stronger connection with our neighbors and feel like we are on vacation all the time”, “I became connected with the tiny house community and saw that it was possible to live full time”, and “I know lots of people I wouldn’t have known before”. These people felt a need to be a part of such a welcoming community that would make such a drastic lifestyle change easier to transition.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results in this essay, the disconnection between materialism and well-being can possibly be explained through voluntary simplicity. Society has a tendency to tell people that the natural order of life is to graduate school, get a good paying job, strive for promotions, and buy a large home, and that this will bring satisfaction in life. This research aims to show quite the opposite in that people can choose to live a simpler life in ways that allow them to have a more fulfilling life. Reducing consumption through simplicity allows people to enjoy other things in life that are more important for the long run such as family, friends, hobbies and nature.

There also exists the hope that this research leads to more productive tiny home research in attempt for this movement to gain more mainstream attention. This movement seems to be viewed as an unrealistic way of life, and niche market of which is unsustainable. However,

people involved in the movement feel as if it is a freeing lifestyle in which others should, at a minimum, give more thought into the concept. Both sides seem to feel as if the other is illogical in their lifestyle choice, and each should be open-minded about this concept.

Tiny home owners face great obstacles in placing their homes once built. For fear of them detracting from the value of typical homes, many tiny homes are not legal in a large number of cities. There are housing regulations ranging from a minimum level of square footage of a dwelling unit to whether this unit is allowed to be mobile. These obstacles act as a great deterrent to the tiny home movement as individuals see the difficulty caused by legislation. This is a major concern among tiny home owners, as many participants during the recruiting process asked if this research would aid in the goal to increase the legality of tiny homes.

A large step towards achieving this goal through research is showing how beneficial to one's well-being this minimalistic lifestyle can be. Rees and Wackernagel (1996) stressed the importance of more sustainable lifestyles saying, "we in the wealthiest cities must do what we can to create cities that are more ecologically benign (including, perhaps, learning to live more simply, that others may live at all)". In the fight between maintaining the social norm of the typical size of housing and creating a more sustainable way of living to ensure that there will be enough resources for future generations, some concessions will have to be made at some point. This research hopes to be a launching pad for future research in the hopes of convincing the authorities to see all of the positive things such a lifestyle can generate.



## ESSAY 2:

### EXAMINING THE LINK BETWEEN SUSTAINABILITY AND WELL-BEING: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

Marketing research has long focused on managerially relevant topics such as loyalty, satisfaction, purchase intentions, etc. providing great insight for practitioners. However, authors are beginning to call for marketing research to focus on bettering the lives of stakeholders in some way. Critics of marketing often associate its efforts with negativity in the form of persuading consumers to purchase items they do not need, cannot afford, or even items that could be harmful to them (e.g. cigarettes). Well-being marketing can be an effective way of combating these negative associations with marketing efforts. While the value chain sees stages of the product development and deployment as opportunities to increase the value added at each stage, well-being marketing is not dissimilar in that every stage from product development to deployment (and possibly through communication) is an opportunity to examine the products' impact on well-being as well as ways to increase this impact.

Appropriately named, voluntary simplicity includes a deliberate choice to reduce one's materialism. Individuals experience consumer well-being as their interaction with products or services benefit not only the individual customer, but also society (Sirgy and Lee 2006). As discovered through the interviews in the previous essay, individuals decided to move into tiny homes typically for environmental or financial reasons. However, living in a tiny house is a holistic approach to voluntary simplicity as the small amount of living quarters somewhat forces

individuals to reduce their consumption of not only utilities but also physical goods. This notion will be tested further in this essay to see if these same motivators influence other acts of voluntary simplicity. Thus, Essay 2 focuses on the following research questions:

1. How does voluntary simplicity influence both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being?
2. What role do antecedents of voluntary simplicity (environmentalism and financial security) play in its relationship with well-being?

### VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

Known as a social movement, voluntary simplicity “embraces frugality of consumption, a strong sense of environmental urgency, a desire to return to living and working environments which are of a more human scale and an intention to realize our higher human potential in community with others” (p.3). Initially coined in 1936 and borrowed in 1977 by Elgin and Mitchell, the concept is based on the deliberate choice to reduce one’s materialism for a variety of reasons. For some, it is a way to reduce one’s environmental footprint. Reducing the amount of products purchased will have an impact, although very small, on the amount of resources used to produce that product in the future. Having a deep social significance, this simplicity helps to address some critical issues for those consumers involved in the movement. Specifically, these issues include an overload of our ecosystem, alienation, and worldwide antagonism (Elgin and Mitchell 1977). In addition, people who engage in voluntary simplicity have been shown to have higher ecological awareness, and self-sufficiency, as well as a conscious effort to reduce their own consumption of products (Leonard-Barton 1981). For others, the choice to consume less products results from a desire to put those resources towards other meaningful avenues. Some people may choose to indulge in more services such as sporting events, concerts, vacations,

tourism, etc. as a way to get more out of life. Some may realize that a materialistic lifestyle consumes a majority of their resources leaving little left for philanthropy and charity work. Some may just feel as if overworking themselves at a job just to keep up with materialistic norms is an unpleasant way to live, and reducing their consumption could mean a reduction in work hours.

While the idea of voluntary simplicity has been around for many years, research on this topic is continuing. Coupled with its deep social significance (Elgin and Mitchell 1977), voluntary simplicity is shown to predict energy conservation as well as intention to purchase environmentally friendly products, such as solar equipment (Leonard-Barton 1981). Consumers who are looking to reduce their environmental footprint will seek products that assist them with this goal. Assumptions are often made about the income level of people who choose to simplify their life, and that those people are often of lower income and use simplification as a way to stretch their funds as much as possible. However, people of moderate income have also been associated with the voluntary simplicity movement, more so than originally anticipated (Huneke 2005).

With negative associations between materialism and overall satisfaction with one's life (Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002; Kasser and Ahuvia 2002; Dittmar et al. 2014), research in voluntary simplicity has also shown that this reduction of product purchases can increase one's enjoyment with their life. A recent meta-analysis confirmed this by finding no positive associations between well-being and materialism (Dittmar et al. 2014). Research has also shown that sub goals can contribute to the success of overall goals in attempt to increase one's quality of life (Devezer et al. 2014). For example, if a consumer has an end-goal of protecting the environment, forgetting to recycle their plastic water bottle (a sub-goal of protecting the environment) may result in a decrease in commitment to future actions concerning sub goals

(e.g. recycling future waste). While there are things that can mitigate this effect, such as the importance of the goal, decreasing commitment to future actions can create a snowball effect that could be detrimental to the end-goal, and ultimately have a negative impact on the well-being of that consumer. This means that small steps along the way can strengthen one's resolve in reaching that goal.

Depending on the form of voluntary simplicity one takes, attaining the goal of simplicity can sometimes create new issues for the attainment of other life goals (Bekin et al. 2005). For example, someone may decide to use a bicycle for their work/school commute as a form of simplicity, as well as a way to avoid contributing to vehicle emissions harmful to the environment. They may dream of being an actor, and may not be able to easily find transportation to auditions outside the reasonable range of their bicycle. This choice to use a bicycle as the sole mode of transportation meets a goal of simplicity. However, it can result in issues when the individual needs to travel larger distances in order to achieve other life goals of possibly becoming an actor.

H<sub>1</sub>: Environmentalism has a positive impact on voluntary simplicity

H<sub>2</sub>: Financial contentment has a positive impact on voluntary simplicity

This essay proposes a positive relationship between voluntary simplicity and both of its formerly discovered antecedents: environmentalism and financial contentment. It is assumed that one's level of concern for the environment will lead them to act in ways that will reduce the negative impact on that environment. Acts of voluntary simplicity range in their impact on their environment, and certainly things like recycling have a large impact on the environment. However, even small acts such as deciding not to purchase unnecessary items can have an impact. Reducing the amount of products purchased reduces demand, which reduces the amount

of product manufactured to meet said demand. This reduction in production inherently reduces the amount of natural resources that are normally used in the manufacturing process.

The second hypothesis proposes a positive relationship between financial contentment and voluntary simplicity. This stems from the desire to reduce one's consumption for financial reasons. Therefore, the desire to feel a sense of financial security will lead one to act in such a way that will help secure such a future. A reduction in consumption in the form of voluntary simplicity can aid in that goal towards a more financially secure future.

## CONSUMER WELL-BEING

Consumer well-being is defined as “a state in which consumers’ experiences with goods and services are judged to be beneficial to both consumers and society at large”, and includes “experiences related to acquisition, preparation, consumption, ownership, maintenance, and disposal of specific categories of goods and services in the context of their local environment” (Sirgy and Lee 2006, p. 43). While a portion of well-being research is closely associated with measures for quality of life, consumer well-being deals with the link between satisfaction in the consumer life domain and satisfaction in the life domain (Lee et al. 2002). While well-being is certainly connected to satisfaction with life, this life satisfaction can be impacted by varying levels of satisfaction within the consumer domain. This is due to the relationship consumers have with their possessions as an extension of who they are or would like to be seen as (Belk 1988). This well-being of consumers is enhanced by their self-image and belonging to a community (Grzeskowiak and Sirgy 2007).

Consumer well-being comes in two forms: eudaimonic and hedonic (Anderson et al. 2013). Hedonic refers to a general happiness of the consumer, and simply meeting the needs of

consumers may have very well met this criteria in the past, as consumers tend to have a general sense of happiness when needs are met. Given that hedonic well-being includes the general happiness of the consumer, some may argue that simply examining customer satisfaction will suffice for measuring hedonic well-being. However, well-being is shown to go beyond satisfaction in that it is the link between that satisfaction and one's quality of life (Sirgy et al. 2007).

Eudaimonic well-being deals with making life easier for individuals in some way. This could include increased access to particular groups, increased literacy, decrease in barriers due to disparity between groups, and overall health (Anderson et al. 2013). Access refers to the ability to make use of a service or the right to obtain a product. Literacy refers to the "ability to communicate meaning through "socially constructed symbols" (Anderson et al. 2013, p. 1205). Decreasing disparity focuses on educating specific population groups so as to decrease the distance in "adverse conditions" observed between those and other populations. As one would likely assume, health focuses on a general betterment of mental and physical well-being (Anderson et al. 2013). For example, ailments in health makes simple tasks such as grocery shopping difficult, but a service to increase the health aspect of eudaimonic well-being would increase the likelihood that this person would now be able to get out of the house and perform such tasks again, making their life easier.

An assumption could be made that individuals would always act in a way that would benefit their well-being; this is not always the case. Research has shown that "ego depletion, differing social norms, ambiguity regarding characteristics of specific behaviors, and activation of individual versus collective levels of self" can deter an individual from acting in a way that best serves their well-being in certain situations (Devezer et al. 2014, p. 118). Other determinants

of this goal importance include the visualization of goals, the relevance of these goals to one's self, and consequences for failing to reach sub goals set forth by the individual (Devezer et al. 2014).

Sirgy, Lee, and Rahtz (2007) recently reviewed the various models used to conceptualize consumer well-being, resulting in a list of fourteen models as shown in Table 1.2. The vastness of domains in which consumer well-being covers requires multiple conceptualizations, and each of these aids in capturing these domains. While each is applicable to various situations, this research includes materialism, cost of living, consumption equity, and possession satisfaction.

Table 2.1: Conceptualized Models of Consumer Well-Being

<b>Model</b>	<b>Conceptualization</b>
Cost of Living	As cost of living changes, ones purchasing power will also change, influencing their ability to maintain a quality of life
Consumption Equity	Countries should purchase goods and services to satisfy basic needs proportional to their population, where purchasing too many basic needs results in less available for those in need
Consumer Complaint	Companies with high level of complaints filed against them will negatively impact consumer well-being
Quality Model	Follows the logic of consumer sovereignty that consumers will choose the products with highest quality and lowest costs resulting in some positive impact on their well-being
Shopping Satisfaction	Specific to consumer satisfaction with the institution from which the purchase was made, rather than the satisfaction with the product itself
Possession Satisfaction	Represents the satisfaction consumers have with their ownership of material possessions
Acquisition/Possession Satisfaction	Refers to one's satisfaction with the overall experiences of purchasing particular goods
Consumer /Product Life Cycle	Examines satisfaction with acquisition, possession, consumption, maintenance, disposal, personal transportation, and housing
Community	The satisfaction of a group or community towards an establishment
Bottom-Up	Positivity and negativity from life events spill over into one's satisfaction in the consumer domain
Perceived Value	Examines the satisfaction one has with a product in multiple life domains such as work life, leisure life, and family life
Marketer's Orientation	Assumes the well-being of consumers is a result of actions by marketers to positively impact the quality of life of their consumers
Materialism	Reflects the negative relationship between materialism and life satisfaction
Globalization	Examines the impact of the globalization of an organization on the quality of life for the local communities

This current project proposes a positive relationship between voluntary simplicity and both of the aforementioned aspects of well-being. Previous interviews with tiny home owners



showed that this lifestyle afforded more free time for these individuals, and previous research shows that individuals who feel as though they have time pressures face higher levels of stress and anxiety (Kasser and Sheldon 2009). Therefore, these acts of voluntary can lead to more free time, which lowers the amount of stress and anxiety ultimately leading to higher levels of well-being. Kasser and Sheldon (2009) showed that individuals who felt less of a time pressure saw higher levels of subjective well-being, which is often associated with hedonic well-being. Therefore, it is being proposed that acts of voluntary simplicity will lead to higher levels of hedonic well-being.

H<sub>3</sub>: Voluntary simplicity has a positive impact on hedonic well-being

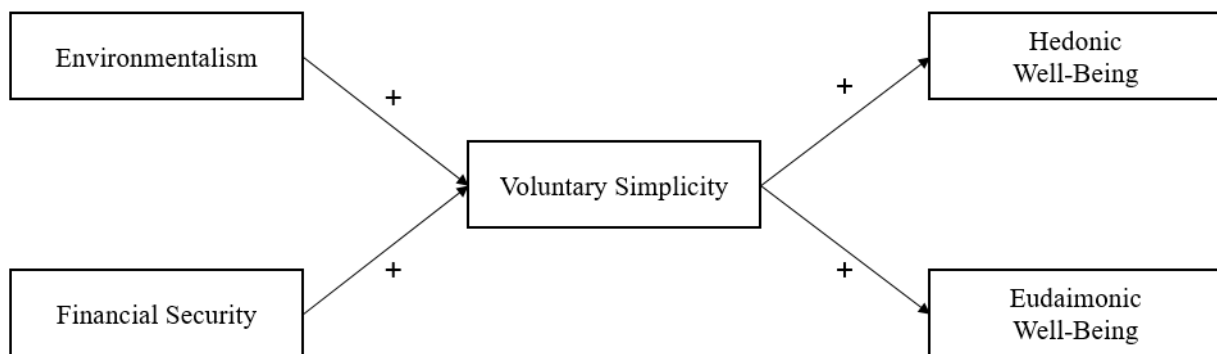
The goal attainment alone of one positively impacting the environment or their financial future would be enough to increase their well-being, whether they feel they are better equipped for the future (eudaimonic) or they are just happier with their lives in general (hedonic). Thus,

H<sub>4</sub>: Voluntary simplicity has a positive impact on eudaimonic well-being

This study investigates the relationship between voluntary simplicity, its antecedents, and possible outcomes including well-being. It is proposed that environmentalism and financial security are motivators for individuals to engage in acts of voluntary simplicity, ultimately resulting in an increase of well-being. Voluntary simplicity has been shown to help individuals grow (Elgin and Mitchell 1977) in their attempts to become more self-sufficient (Leonard-Barton 1981). As these individuals see themselves as growing, the eudaimonic aspect of well-being will be influenced positively. This accomplishment of voluntary simplicity can lead to increased levels of access, literacy, social well-being, and decreased disparity (Anderson et al. 2013).

Pairing these hypotheses with the aforementioned impact environmentalism and financial contentment are proposed to have on voluntary simplicity, it is also proposed that voluntary simplicity is going to mediate the relationship between these antecedents and the aspects of well-being.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Model



H5: Voluntary simplicity mediates the relationship between environmentalism and hedonic well-being

H6: Voluntary simplicity mediates the relationship between environmentalism and eudaimonic well-being

H7: Voluntary simplicity mediates the relationship between financial contentment and hedonic well-being

H8: Voluntary simplicity mediates the relationship between financial contentment and eudaimonic well-being

### PRETEST

Before testing the hypotheses, a pretest was completed in order to ensure that the measures used were appropriate as well as the potential of the proposed relationships. For the pretest, 90 students from a local southeastern university were recruited to participate in a survey.

The details of this survey are the same as the main study, and specific items on the survey

are depicted in the attached appendices. Students were incentivized with course credit, but were not forced to participate. This is only one of the given options for this credit to combat potential response bias. After collecting the surveys, an initial analysis of the data was completed to test the potential relationships and determine whether the main study should move forward or if changes were necessary before progressing. Initial results from the pretest showed promise towards the proposed relationships, signaling that a full-scale study would be appropriate. Therefore, with few changes from the pretest, the full-scale study was initiated.

## MAIN STUDY – METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

This quantitative study consists of surveying individuals that were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk. While there have been some criticisms of data collection from M-Turk, there are numerous examples of its use in major journals. When recruiting participants, the goal is obtain diversity in attempt to better represent the entire population of study, and participants in surveys on Amazon's Mechanical Turk have been found to be more diverse than typical internet recruiting methods (Buhrmester et al. 2011). They were also found to either meet or exceed psychometric criteria typically demonstrated in research journals (Buhrmester et al. 2011).

A benefit of mTurk is the ability to make sure participants meet certain requirements before allowing them to partake in the survey. This feature was utilized to ensure that participants were located in the U.S. to minimize language barriers, which could negatively affect the credibility of the responses. A filter was also set so that only participants who had previously taken over one thousand surveys with an acceptance rate of over 98% would be allowed to take part in this survey. This ensures that those involved in the survey take the process

serious and are familiar with the inner workings of mTurk. Once these requirements were set, an incentive of \$0.25 was offered in exchange for survey responses. Upon accessing the survey, participants were given a survey code that was randomly generated. Participants then used this code after completion of the survey to validate their taking of the survey and ensure they receive their incentive. The intent of this process is to make sure that actual people are taking these surveys.

Five hundred individuals were recruited for the purposes of this study, and after being shown a statement of informed consent, the survey began with items from a voluntary simplicity scale to measure each participant’s typical inclusion of these activities in their daily routines. They were then asked questions regarding the likelihood of them engaging in voluntary simplicity, as well as well-being items to measure their satisfaction with life, and life vitality. Questions regarding one’s outlook on their own personal financial security as well as their concern for the environment were then presented towards the end of the survey.

Table 2.2: Coding Scheme Used for Analysis

<b>Code</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Conceptualization</b>
FC	Financial Contentment	Measures one's level of satisfaction with their current financial situation
ENV	Environmentalism	Measures one's concern for the environment
VS	Voluntary Simplicity	Measures one's likelihood to voluntarily participate in simplifying activities
HWB	Hedonic Well-Being	Measures one's general life satisfaction
EWB	Eudaimonic Well-Being	Measures one's functional life satisfaction

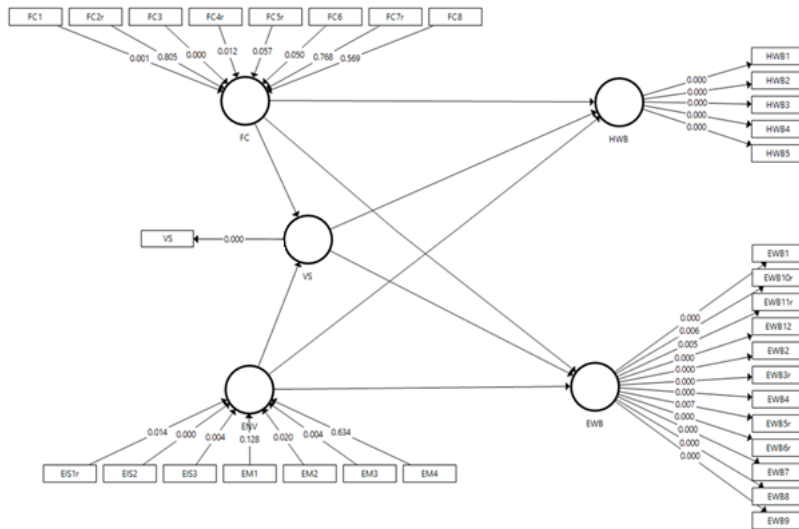
## DATA ANALYSIS

Once the responses were collected, they were exported for cleaning in preparation for analysis. Given the nature of the model represented in figure 2.1, structural equation modeling was used to analyze the proposed relationships. Specifically, a program called SmartPLS

employed to analyze this structural model. In evaluating structural models, there are two main types of methods used. The most common approach, covariance based (CB-SEM), is “primarily used to confirm a set of systematic relationships between multiple variables that can be tested empirically” (Hair et al. 2016). CB-SEM seeks to reproduce a theoretical covariance matrix and lacks a focus on explained variance, which is a strength of the partial least squares (PLS-SEM) approach (Hair et al. 2011). While CB-SEM adheres to a set of assumptions, PLS-SEM is preferred when these assumptions cannot be met, and provides more robust estimations of the model (Hair et al. 2011). PLS-SEM makes no assumptions of distribution, and tends to have higher reliability in parameter estimation due to the greater amount of statistical power it possesses (Hair et al. 2016). These reasons, among many others, are the main reasons the PLS-SEM approach was chosen.

An initial model (stage I model), was run that included main variables as well as all items used to measure the items. While some choose to use summative scores when analyzing constructs, this assumes that all items are weighted (or contribute) equally. Allowing each item to load individually on the variable allows for the varied weight of each item on the variable. Before the model can be tested, each item is scrutinized and those items found to be non-significant indicators of the variable are deleted. As seen in figure 2.2, a few items were not significant indicators, and were consequently deleted in the next iteration of this model.

Figure 2.2: Stage I Model



An initial model (stage I model), was run that included main variables as well as all items used to measure the items. While some choose to use summative scores when analyzing constructs, this assumes that all items are weighted (or contribute) equally. Allowing each item to load individually on the variable allows for the varied weight of each item on the variable. Before the model can be tested, each item is scrutinized and those items found to be non-significant indicators of the variable are deleted. As seen in figure 2.2, a few items were not significant indicators, and were consequently deleted in the next iteration of this model.

After deleting the non-significant indicators, the stage II model was generated and further assessment of the model is necessary before examining the significance of relationships within the model. These tests will ensure that the items used to measure each variable properly represent the variables, and that no measurement error is present in the model. If these variables are found not to be valid and reliable, there will be no implications from potential relationships within the model. Testing for validity and reliability is slightly different for formative versus reflective

measures, thus a distinction of the type of variables used is essential. Environmentalism and financial contentment were used as formative indicators in the model. Formative indicators are used when the indicator variables are assumed to form (cause) the measurement of the variable. None of the variables used in this model used formative indicators.

All five variables in the model: environmentalism, financial contentment, voluntary simplicity, hedonic well-being, and eudaimonic well-being, were categorized as reflective indicators. Counter to formative measures where the items are assumed to cause the measurement of the variable, reflective indicators are assumed to cause the measurement of the items. For example, the items used to measure voluntary simplicity ask participants how likely they are to participate in certain activities. Their answer to each of these questions is caused by their inherent level of voluntary simplicity, as if their answers are ‘reflective’ of their innate level of voluntary simplicity.

In order to confirm construct validity within the measured factors, we must first establish discriminant as well as convergent validity. Churchill (1979) defines discriminant validity as the extent to which the measure is indeed novel and not simply a reflection of some other variable, and defines convergent validity as the extent to which it correlates highly with other methods designed to measure the same construct. These constructs were assessed for discriminant validity according to Fornell and Larker (1981), where AVE is compared to the squared correlations. Given that all of the AVEs for the constructs are higher than the squared correlations, we can see that discriminant validity has been demonstrated in this model. This means that there is evidence to support the notion that each of these factors are legitimate indicators of the latent variables in the model.

Table 2.3: Analyzing Construct Reliability

		FC	ENV	VS	HWM	EWB
FC	Financial Contentment	<b>.92/.80</b>	0.00	0.00	0.29	0.24
ENV	Environmentalism	-0.001	<b>.82/.54</b>	0.30	0.02	0.00
VS	Voluntary Simplicity	0.004	0.548	<b>.87/.29</b>	0.07	0.00
HWB	Hedonic Well-Being	0.537	0.147	0.266	<b>.94/.77</b>	0.31
EWB	Eudaimonic Well-Being	0.491	-0.001	0.026	0.561	<b>.87/.41</b>

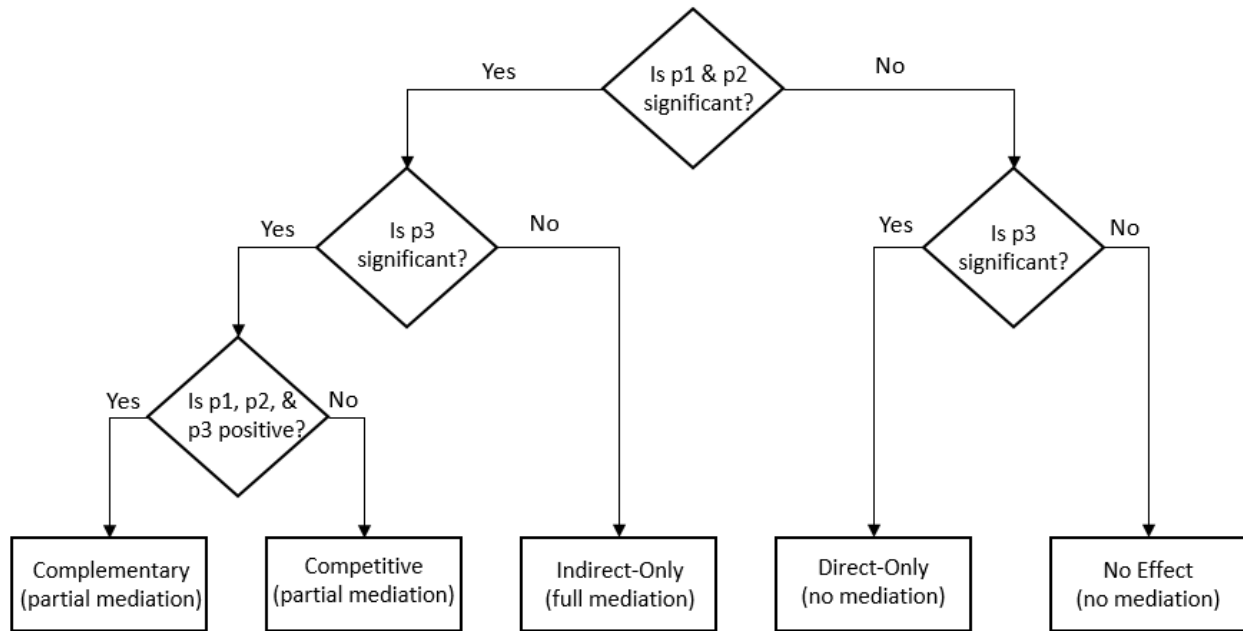
Composite Reliabilities and (Avg. Var. Extracted) are shown in bold on the Diagonal  
Correlations are shown on the lower matrix while squared correlations are shown on the upper matrix

Discriminate validity is shown by comparing the AVE to the squared correlation  
If AVE exceeds the squared correlation, then discriminant validity is demonstrated.

According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), convergent validity can be determined by observing the average variance explained (AVE), where an AVE higher than .5 indicates that there is convergent validity. According to the analysis, there is evidence that there is convergent validity within most of these constructs. Financial contentment, environmentalism, and hedonic well-being are all represented by AVEs larger than 0.5, meaning each of these variables After testing for both discriminant and convergent validity, I can say that construct validity is satisfactory, and now a structural model will be set up in order to verify that these factors are significant indicators of their corresponding latent variables.



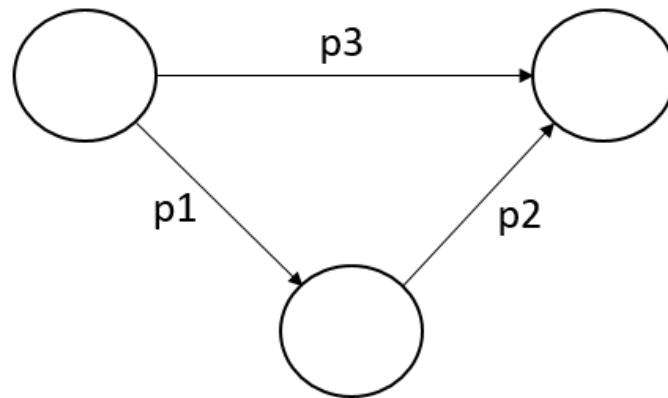
Figure 2.3: SmartPLS Mediation Analysis Procedure



\* Hair Jr, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C., & Sarstedt, M. (2016). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)*. Sage publications.

As stated previously, a program called SmartPLS was utilized in testing the structural model. Given that all software packages have differences in how they analyze models, it is important to distinguish how models are analyzed in this program before moving forward. A decision tree (figure 2.3) is used when discerning if mediation is present and which type of mediation is occurring if found. The delineation between ‘p1’, ‘p2’, and ‘p3’ can be seen in figure 2.4, which again is used as part of the mediation analysis procedure in determining what type of mediation occurs in the model.

Figure 2.4: General Mediation Model



\* Hair Jr, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C., & Sarstedt, M. (2016). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)*. Sage publications.

Now that the validity of the constructs has been completed, a full examination of the model can take place as it tests the aforementioned hypotheses. An examination of the model shows support for H1 and H2 as both financial contentment and environmentalism seem to have a positive relationship with voluntary simplicity ( $p=0.002$  and  $>0.001$  respectively). This means that the desire to have a financially secure future as well as a concern for the environment are shown to increase the amount of voluntarily simplistic activities that one engages in. A significant positive relationship is also seen between voluntary simplicity and both aspects of well-being: hedonic ( $p=0.001$ ) and eudaimonic ( $p=0.006$ ). This supports the notion that individuals who engage in these activities see themselves as happier in life and feel fewer hardships due to this lifestyle (support for H3 and H4).

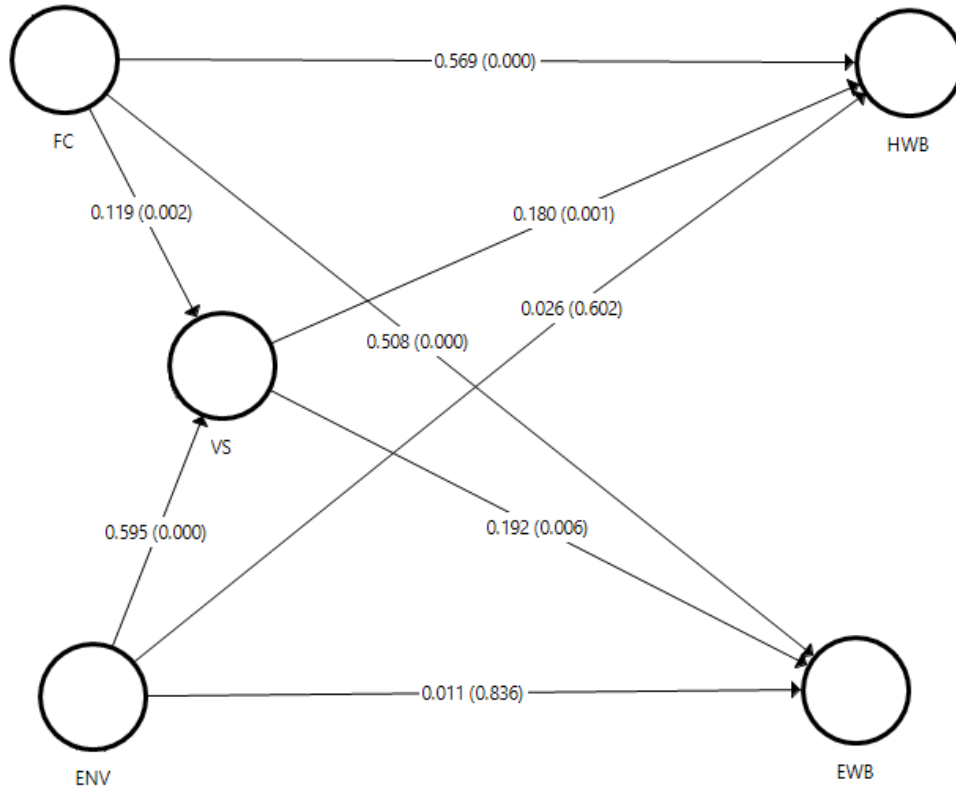
Pairing the decision tree with the data given in the structural model, we can see that voluntary simplicity partially mediates the relationship between financial contentment and hedonic well-being. This means that while voluntary simplicity aids in the positive effects of financial contentment on one's hedonic well-being (support for H7), this relationship is only partially mediated, as there is a positive direct effect between financial contentment and hedonic well-being. Voluntary simplicity is also found to partially mediate the relationship between financial contentment and eudaimonic well-being.

In examination of the mediating effects of voluntary simplicity in the relationship between environmentalism and the aspects of well-being, we see full mediation. Figure 2.5 shows significant paths from environmentalism to voluntary simplicity and from voluntary simplicity to both aspects of well-being. However, the paths from environmentalism to hedonic ( $p=0.602$ ) and eudaimonic ( $p=0.836$ ) well-being are both insignificant, again signifying a fully mediated relationship between environmentalism and both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, supporting both H5 and H6.

Table 2.4: Structural Equation Modeling Summary Table

<i>Structural Equation Modeling Results</i>								
<i>Hypothesized Paths Model</i>								
Hypotheses				<i>Parameter Coefficient</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>
H1	ENV	→	VS	0.585	>0.001	Financial Contentment	0.877	--
H2	FC	→	VS	0.120	>0.001	Environmentalism	0.805	--
H3	VS	→	HWB	0.288	>0.001	Voluntary Simplicity	0.849	0.368
H4	VS	→	EWB	0.482	>0.001	Hedonic Well-Being	0.833	0.083
						Eudaimonic Well-Being	0.865	0.232
H5	ENV	→	VS	→	HWB	0.107	>0.001	
H6	ENV	→	VS	→	EWB	0.114	0.009	
H7	FC	→	VS	→	HWB	0.021	0.019	
H8	FC	→	VS	→	EWB	0.023	0.044	

Figure 2.5: Stage II Measurement Model



## RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

Results from data analysis present some interesting findings. As proposed, a positive relationship was found between voluntary simplicity and the suggested antecedents financial contentment and environmentalism. While this supports the findings from interviews with tiny home owners about their motivations for choosing such a lifestyle, it is also interesting to find that these can also be motivating factors for a less holistic approach to voluntary simplicity.

Even more impressive is the fact that these smaller acts of voluntary simplicity were shown to still positively affect the well-being of individuals. The impressiveness of this lies in

the fact that tiny homes are not a viable option for everyone, and it is encouraging to know that these smaller acts can still have a positive impact on one's well-being. Therefore, people who do not agree with the lifestyle choice of living in a tiny home can find other ways to positively affect their environment, their future financial situation, the amount of hardships encountered in life, as well as their overall life satisfaction. For researchers and practitioners alike, these findings are encouraging in that, from a strategic standpoint, marketing has the potential to make a positive long-term impact on the mindset and consumption patterns of consumers.

### WELL-BEING MARKETING

An impactful way for organizations to positively impact society at-large would be in considering the effect of their marketing decisions. While practitioners and researchers alike are beginning to see the value in focusing on the well-being of consumers, a disconnect often exists between consumers and the attempts of marketers. A recent study shows that in the absence of consumer-oriented message framing, consumers are skeptical of marketing activities and typically associate these actions with negativity for consumers and positivity for businesses (Kachersky and Lerman 2013). Well-being marketing can be used to remedy this disconnect and give comfort to consumers.

An adaptation of the marketing concept, the societal marketing concept was developed as a call for marketers to provide benefit to the well-being of society in meeting the needs of their consumers (Bloch 1995). One method companies can use to influence the well-being of their consumers is directly through the need recognition and development of products and services in order to increase consumer satisfaction. Recently there has been a call to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of this process in order to enhance and preserve the well-being of consumers

(Kotler et al. 2002). Besides customer satisfaction, another way to influence the well-being of their customers is through their marketing efforts, known as well-being marketing (Sirgy and Lee 2008). Well-being marketing gives organizations an opportunity to produce goods and services that not only enhance the well-being of their consumers, but also to their environment and society, and focuses on implementing strategies to improve well-being throughout the consumer and product life-cycles (Sirgy and Lee 2006).

Grounded in business ethics, well-being marketing was developed as a way to enhance the comprehensive perspective of normative ethics in marketing (Sirgy and Lee 2008).

Normative ethics refers to a set of guidelines (not necessarily through written rules) that help future decision makers when presented with a situation. The logic behind this is similar to how societal norms are developed through time and allow people to learn from the actions of those before them. This means that well-being marketing was developed as a way to guide future marketers in their decision making when concerning the well-being of their customers, while establishing long-term relationships with customers (Sirgy and Lee 2008).

Recent authors have argued that well-being marketing is most ethical when compared to the previous approaches of transaction marketing and relationship marketing (Sirgy and Lee 2008). Transactional marketing is the traditional school of thought, guided by classical economic theory and consumer sovereignty. Classical economic theory represents the thought that businesses must use sales techniques to acquire new customers to enhance profitability. This is a sales driven notion that a firm exists to provide a product to meet the needs of consumers, and the more customers a company can acquire, the higher amount of profit that company will receive. Consumer sovereignty is also a more traditional outlook on business positing that while companies make assessments of the needs of consumers, and which products to produce/sell in

order to best meet those needs, it is ultimately the job of consumers to pick the best suited product to meet their needs. This means that consumers will vote economically with their wallets by choosing which company has produced a product meeting their needs above the competitors. This means well informed consumers will reward companies who produce better quality products at lower prices, and will weed out inefficient competitors by not choosing them (Sirgy and Lee 2008).

While transactional marketing is a more traditional way of doing business, relationship marketing is a more recent trend as companies attempt to find yet another way to differentiate themselves. The “inefficient” companies from the transactional marketing way of thinking were realizing the weeding out process has begun and they would need another way to stand out among the competition. Companies realized that simply producing a product and using sales techniques was not going to be sustainable enough. Marketers began to urge companies to form deeper, long-term relationships with customers in order to maximize their profitability and provide a mutual benefit, thus the relationship marketing paradigm was born (Sirgy and Lee 2008). Stemming from the stakeholder view of the firm (Freeman 1984), relationship marketing refers to all marketing activities aimed at this development and sustaining of long-term relationships (Morgan and Hunt 1994). The stakeholder view of the firm states that companies operate as a function of relationships (Freeman 1984), and relationship marketing focuses more on the relationships with external stakeholders, specifically those built with customers over long periods of time.

While relationship marketing is seemingly on a higher ethical plane than transactional marketing, recent authors have argued that both fall short in guiding marketing decision makers in positively impacting consumers and the overall environment (Sirgy and Lee 2008). With

business inherently having an impact on society as a whole (Drucker 1969), it has been argued that there is an ethical responsibility of businesses to consider the well-being of their consumers and environment in their decision making and marketing efforts, known as well-being marketing. (Sirgy and Lee 2008). Grounded in duty ethics, the thought that companies have a duty to their consumers, society, and themselves to be ethical, well-being marketing is defined as “a business philosophy that guides the development, pricing, promotion, and distribution of consumer goods to individuals and families for the purpose of enhancing consumer well-being at a profit (in the long run) in a manner that does not adversely affect the public, including the environment” (Sirgy and Lee 2008, p.387).

Well-being marketing is posited as a more comprehensive from a normative ethics perspective than is transactional or relationship marketing. The logic follows that as customers look to cast their economic vote, they will be more likely to purchase from companies who have their well-being as well as the environment’s well-being in mind. This will also likely make the long-term relationship building of the relationship marketing perspective easier as customers will foster larger amounts of trust towards companies actively pursuing well-being. Building this trust through consistent behaviors is key in ensuring a mutual benefit for both parties in the eyes of the consumer (Gullet et al. 2010).

Marketing as whole, in the minds of consumers, has been linked to something that is positive for business, but not necessarily positive for consumers (Kachersky and Lerman 2013). This means that marketers must overcome the perception that marketing is deceitful and used only to selfishly benefit the company by generating sales. Convincing customers that their own well-being as well as that of the environment could help in overcoming this stigma. Research has



shown that an increase in well-being perception towards a company can result in increased brand identification and repurchase/revisit intentions (Hwang and Lyu 2015).

## CONCLUSION

Incorporating a mindset of preserving and enhancing the well-being of consumers and the environment can be important for multiple reasons. For example, for as much as well-being marketing can benefit society as a whole, neglect of this responsibility can have negative impacts on society over time. This neglect can adversely affect the overall business as consumers may punish those companies who are willfully neglecting the well-being of their consumers and environment by choosing to be loyal to companies who are mindful of well-being. Lastly, recent movements in cause-related marketing have shown that attempting to improve society can be a business opportunity rewarded by loyalty as well as new customers, as these customers want to be associated with positively affecting society (Drucker 1969; Sirgy and Lee 2008).

This also gives hope to businesses who are looking to positively affect the happiness of their consumers outside of product satisfaction. Organizations can utilize these results to encourage such activities and possibly even make such activities easier. For example, some of the items used in measuring voluntary simplicity centered on the concept of recycling. This means that encouraging recycling, or even placing bins in stores where customers can recycle may lead to increases in the well-being of their customers. Going beyond product satisfaction by showing a genuine concern for the well-being of their customers could possibly lead to other advantages in the market such as brand equity, loyalty, increases in word-of-mouth, etc., and further research into this could shed light on the added benefits of such concern for the well-being of consumers.

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## LIST OF APPENDICES

## Essay 1

### Tiny House Owner Interview Questions

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1. Why did you choose to live in a tiny house rather than other living situations?
2. What other living situations did you consider?
3. How did you find out about tiny houses?
4. Who/what influenced you to live in a tiny house?
5. How involved were you in the building process?
6. How has your life changed as a result of living in a tiny house?
7. What are some challenges of living in a tiny house?
8. What are some benefits of living in a tiny house?
9. How have your purchasing habits changed by living in a tiny house?
  - a. Are there any items you've had to reject purchasing?
  - b. Are there any items you've had to restrict purchasing?
  - c. Are there any items you've decided to reclaim?
10. If you could change one thing about living in a tiny house, what would it be?
11. How long have you lived in a tiny house?
12. How long do you intend to live in the tiny house?
13. Do you live in a community of other tiny home owners, or are you fairly secluded?
14. What size is your home now?
15. What size was your previous home?
16. In your opinion, is the tiny house market more of a fad, a niche, or a paradigm shift?

## Essay 2

### Hedonic Non-Profit Donor Well-Being

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*Satisfaction With Life Scale - Pavot and Diener (1993)*

In most ways my life is close to ideal

The conditions of my life are excellent

I am satisfied with my life

So far I have gotten the important things I want in life

If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing

### Eudiamonic Non-Profit Consumer Well-Being

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*Self-Esteem - Rosenberg (1965)*

On the whole, I am satisfied with myself

I feel that I am a person of worth

All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure r

I take a positive attitude toward myself

*Locus of Control - Mueller and Thomas (2001)*

My success depends on whether I am lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time  
To a great extent my life is controlled by accidental happenings  
When I get what I want, it is usually because I worked hard for it  
My life is determined by my own actions  
When I get what I want, it is usually because I worked hard for it  
It is not wise for me to plan too far ahead, because things turn out to be a matter of bad fortune  
Whether or not I am successful in life depends mostly on my ability  
I feel that what happens in my life is mostly determined by people in powerful positions  
Success in business is mostly a matter of luck  
I feel in control of my life

*Personal Expressiveness - Waterman (1993)*

This activity gives me my greatest feeling of really being alive  
This activity gives me my strongest feelings that this is who I really am  
When I engage in this activity I feel more intensely involved than I do in most other activities  
When I engage in this activity I feel that this is what I was meant to do  
I feel more complete or fulfilled when engaging in this activity than I do when engaged in most other activities  
I feel a special fit or meshing when engaging in this activity

Voluntary Simplicity Lifestyle Scale - Leonard-Barton (1981)

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*How likely are you to engage in the following activities?*

make gifts instead of buying  
ride a bicycle as a form of exercise or recreation  
recycle newspapers used at home  
recycle glass bottles used at home  
recycle cans used at home  
have a member of the family (or a friend) change the oil in the family car  
acquire instruction in skills to increase self-reliance, for example, in carpentry, car repair, or plumbing  
buy clothing at a second-hand store  
buy major items of furniture or clothing at a garage sale  
make furniture or clothing for the family  
have exchanged goods or services with others in lieu of payment with money, e.g., repairing equipment in exchange for other skilled work  
have a compost pile  
contribute to ecologically-oriented organizations  
belong to a cooperative  
grow vegetables the family consumes during the summer season  
ride a bicycle for transportation to work  
ride a bicycle on errands within two miles of home

Financial Contentment - Etkin, Evangelidis, and Aaker (2015) - JMR

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I have enough money to buy the things that are important to me  
There has not been enough money to go around (reverse)  
I have been able to buy what I want  
I feel like I'm pretty poor (reverse)  
My bank account is too low (reverse)  
I have enough money to buy what I need to buy  
I am broke (reverse)  
I have plenty of spare money

*Scale Items for "Environmentalism" Variable*

Ecological Motivations - Egea and Garcia de Frutos (2013) Psychology and Marketing

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I think it is my duty as a citizen to protect the environment  
I am very concerned about the world that I will leave for the future and young generations  
I think that taking actions to preserve the environment will save me money  
I have been directly exposed to the consequences of climate change

Environmentalist Identity Strength - Bolton and Reed (2004) JMR

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I don't really think of myself as an environmentalist (reverse)  
Being an environmentally conscious person is an important part of who I am  
I see myself first and foremost as an environmentalist

Essay 2 Descriptive Statistics

**Descriptive Statistics**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>N</b>
VS	2.622	0.702	501
HWB	2.419	1.005	501
EWB	2.301	0.738	501
FS	2.844	1.044	501
ENV	2.581	0.871	501

**Correlations**

	VS	HWB	EWB	FS	ENV
VS	1	.266**	0.026	0.004	.548**
HWB	.266**	1	.561**	.537**	.147**
EWB	0.026	.561**	1	.491**	-0.001
FS	0.004	.537**	.491**	1	-0.001
ENV	.548**	.147**	-0.001	-0.001	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## VITA

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### ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

Ph.D. The University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS, Expected 2018

M.B.A. The University of Tennessee at Martin, Martin, TN, 2012

B.S. The University of Tennessee at Martin, Martin, TN, 2009

### ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Lecturer of Marketing, Lander University (2018-present)

Visiting Instructor, University of Mississippi – Tupelo Campus (2017-2018)

Teaching Assistant, University of Mississippi (2014-2017)

### NON-ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Online Sales Manager, The Shoe Shack (2013 - 2014).

IT Technologist, The University of Tennessee at Martin (2010 - 2013).

IT Configuration and Installation Specialist, The University of Tennessee at Martin (2006 - 2010).

Detailer, Frito-Lay North America Inc. (2007-2009)

Auctioneer Assistant, West TN Wholesale and Auction (2002-2013)

#### PRESENTATION OF REFEREED PAPERS

Ezell, D. (2017) Looking Through Rose-Colored Glasses: Processing New Information with Brand Love Present. *Marketing Management Association*.

Ezell D., Gala, P., Tillman, F. (2017) The Journey of a PhD: The Transition from grad student to tenure track faculty and the three legged stool. *Marketing Management Association*.

Gala, P., Tillman, F., Ezell, D., (2017) Married or Single: Impact of Marital Status of CEO on Marketing Outcomes. *Marketing Management Association*.

Vorhies, D., Bush, V., Orr, L., Ezell, D., (2017) Examining the Impact of Sales Management Capabilities on Firm Performance. *The Thought Leadership on the Sales Profession Conference*.

Ezell, D. (2016) Looking Through Rose-Colored Glasses: Processing New Information with Brand Love Present. *Society for Marketing Advances*.

Ezell, D., Bush, V., (2015). When Brands Love You Back: Reciprocation in the CustomerCompany Dyad. *Society for Marketing Advances*.

Zhang, C., Du, L., Ezell, D., Hou, J., (2015) Determining the Antecedents of Positive Word-of Mouth for Nonprofit Organizations. *Society for Marketing Advances*.

#### WORKING PAPERS

Ezell, D., (2017) Length of Ownership and Source Credibility of Online Reviews.

Ezell, D., Bush, V., (2017) Non-Profit Marketing Capabilities for Consumer Well-Being.

Ezell, D., Vorhies, D., Bush, V., Orr, L., (2017) Examining the Impact of Sales Capabilities on Firm Performance.

Ezell, D., (2017) Company Ethical History and Product Involvement Concerning Online Product Reviews

Ezell, D., (2017) Crisis Averted? The Moderating Role of Firm Prominence Amidst a Product Harm Crisis.

#### PRESENTATION OF NON-REFEREED PAPERS

Dong, M., Ezell, D., Vitell, S., (2016) The Role of Religiosity in the Ethical Behavior of Hispanic Consumers. *Southeastern Marketing Symposium*.

Ezell, D., (2015) When Brands Love You Back: The Impact of Product Personalization. *Southeastern Marketing Symposium*.

#### SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

Academic Conference: Session Chair

2017: Marketing Management Association

2016: Society for Marketing Advances

2015: Society for Marketing Advances



Reviewer: Conference Paper

2016: Society for Marketing Advances

2017: Society for Marketing Advances

#### MEMBERSHIPS

American Marketing Association

Marketing Management Association

Society for Marketing Advances

#### HONORS AND AWARDS

University of Mississippi Research Assistantship (2014-present)

Society for Marketing Advances Doctoral Consortium Fellow (2016)

Graduate Assistantship, The University of Mississippi (2014-2017)