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The Temporal and Focal Dynamics of Volitional Reconsumption: A Phenomenological Investigation of Repeated Hedonic Experiences

CRISTEL ANTONIA RUSSELL
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Volitional reconsumption refers to experiences that consumers actively and consciously seek to experience again. Phenomenological interviews centered on the rereading of books, the rewatching of movies, and the revisiting of geographic places reveal the temporal and focal dimensions of hedonic volitional reconsumption phenomenon and five dominant categories therein. Consumers navigate within and between reconsumption experiences in a hyperresponsive and experientially controlled manner. The dynamics in time and focus fueled by the reconsumed object allow emotional efficiency, as consumers optimize the search for and attainment of the emotional outcomes sought in volitional reconsumption, and facilitate existential understanding, as the linkages across past, present, and future experiences enable an active synthesis of time and promote self-reflexivity. Consumers gain richer and deeper insights into the reconsumption object itself but also an enhanced awareness of their own growth in understanding and appreciation through the lens of the reconsumption object.

> Recently I was cleaning and I picked the book up again and I opened the book and I thought, and I read a little bit and it all came back to me, and I thought, "I've got to read that book again." (Lynette, female participant in her early 60s)

Our inquiry was motivated by the desire to understand reconsumption experiences such as Lynette's who describes how she came to reread *The Bridges of Madison County*. We propose the term *reconsumption* to refer to consumption experiences that consumers actively and consciously seek to experience again. There are many consumption experiences that one might choose to repeat, from visiting a favorite spot on a beach, to listening to a particular song from one's music collection, to watching a commercial on YouTube. Especially prone to reconsumption are hedonic experiences, sought for their rich emotional, cognitive, and sensorial responses (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Lacher and Mizerski 1994), the sheer pleasure and inherent satisfaction they provide (Botti and McGill 2011). For millennia, people have had books they can read again, fairy tales they can hear again, and places, monuments, churches, temples, or mosques they can visit again. The digital age, with services like Netflix or iTunes, further increases the ease and speed with which consumers can access previously consumed hedonic products. And indeed, Tim, one of our youngest participants, accesses all of his home entertainment on his computer and readily declares "everything on my computer is rewatched."

What motivates consumers to want to repeat a hedonic experience? What purposes do these volitional reconsumption experiences serve? Consumer research to date does not

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provide clear answers to these questions, having mainly tackled automatic types of reconsumption experiences, such as those driven by habits or addictions. This kind of reconsumption, sometimes termed "mundane" or "quotidian," is so frequent and banal that consumers often do not think about the fact that they are consuming the same product or brand over and over again (Bennett and Watson 2005; Verplanken and Wood 2006). In the case of addictions, consumers evidently cannot control the reconsumption (Boyer and Liénard 2007). Such experiences differ sharply from more volitional types of reconsumption, such as rereading a book or rewatching a movie, which are the focus of this article.

The literature on unique experiences, decisions, or choices has highlighted the difference between choosing to innovate and choosing to reconsume (Ratner and Kahn 2002) and identified some of the key drivers of unique choices and variety-seeking behavior, such as the expression of freedom (Kim and Drolet 2003; Levav and Zhu 2009). The body of research on extraordinary experiences (Abrahams 1986), such as climbing Kilimanjaro or Machu Picchu (Tumbat and Belk 2011) or going whitewater rafting (Arnould and Price 1993), likewise suggests that reexperiences must be different—before, during, and after—from one-time experiences. Whereas novel and unique experiences will necessarily be characterized by vague expectations, and a sense of newness of perception and process, reconsumption is always repetition and rests on past knowledge. How does this past knowledge affect the reconsumption experience? How is a reexperience similar or different from the previous one? If experience is defined as something singular (Abrahams 1986), can a repeated hedonic experience provide the same level of stimulation, satisfaction, and pleasure as a novel one?

Philosophers have long debated the fundamental notion of repetition, which underlies all forms of reconsumption, and their debates provide some preliminary considerations essential to answering these questions (Eriksen 2000; Gendron 2008; Hume 1978). They note the interdependencies between actions linked in time and the static and dynamic processes that affect similarities and differences across repeated experiences (Deleuze 1968/1994). They query whether repeating necessarily means a movement to retrieve the past or whether instead it is something new. In his essay about repetition, Kierkegaard (1893, 103) expresses the dialectics of repetition: "that which is repeated has been, otherwise it could not be repeated, but the very fact that it has been makes the repetition into something new." For Heidegger (1953), repetition is a process of reclamation rather than recurrence: it reopens the past and translates that which has been into possibilities to be chosen time and again.

Our investigation seeks to find out why consumers choose to repeat hedonic experiences, what they get out of them, and how the linkages between past, present, and future are revealed in these endeavors. To begin to uncover the nature, motivations, and outcomes of volitional reconsumption, we conducted phenomenological interviews centered on three types of hedonic reconsumption: the rereading of books, the rewatching of movies, and the revisiting of geographic places. Informed by the disciplines of philosophy and psychology, which have treated the basic topic of repetition, our analysis of these narratives reveals the temporal and focal dimensions of the hedonic volitional reconsumption phenomenon and the dynamics therein.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, we synthesize how consumer researchers have studied the psychology of reconsumption. We also review two bodies of research that are informative in an inquiry of the phenomenon of volitional reconsumption: one addresses the temporal factors at play in repeated consumption experiences and choices, and the other focuses on the interplay between object and self in consumption.

Existing Research on Reconsumption

As table 1 summarizes, consumer research to date has focused on three broad types of reconsumption: habitual, addictive, and ritualistic (Knight 1999). Habitual reconsumption refers to a form of regular and automatic repetition of consumption that develops through trial and error (Murray and Häubl 2007) and that provides automaticity and cognitive efficiency (Wood, Quinn, and Kashy 2002). Such automaticity is common in consumption experiences. For instance, recent research on food consumption habits has uncovered the construct of baseline habit, that is, that there are stable patterns of food eating behavior that free a person from exerting effort in repetitive decisions (Khare and Inman 2006). In other words, the action can be repeated without rethinking it in memory. When under pressure, people often fall back on repetition, even when their initial intention was to choose an alternative option (Betsch et al. 2004): in a busy line at a fast food restaurant, consumers pressed for time are more likely to turn to familiar menu items and order the routine option.

Consumer researchers have also been interested in forms of reconsumption termed "addictive," "obsessive," or "compulsive," all of which are characterized by a failure to control one's actions despite their undesirability (Goodman 1990) and by an irresistible urge to repeat certain behaviors that provide short-term rewards but can lead to delayed negative consequences (O'Guinn and Faber 1989). This type of reconsumption is not volitional and instead more akin to a form of enslavement, as Hirschman vividly describes in her phenomenological inquiry of drug addicts. Addicts use the addictive substance or behavior as a way to "create and maintain a stable sense of self" (1992, 175). The repetition characteristic of obsessive-compulsive disorders (OCD) results from a general failure to "evaluate one's responsibility in external events and form an appropriate picture of one's situation" (Boyer and Liénard 2007, 599). Thus we see that, in its negative forms, reconsumption is inherently linked to a sense of one's self, a notion which is likely to surface as well in volitional forms of reconsumption.

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TABLE 1

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON RECONSUMPTION

	Habitual reconsumption	Addictive reconsumption	Ritualistic reconsumption
Characteristics	• Regular, smooth, and automatic behavior (Verplanken 2006) • Skill-based habits that make it easier for consumers to use a particular product or service (Murray and Häubl 2007)	• Unmanageable, uncontrollable repeated behavior with negative consequences (Goodman 1990; Shaffer 1999) • Pathological state comprising three stages: anticipation/consumption/withdrawal (Koob and Le Moal 1997)	• Sequence of behaviors repeated at episodic, predictable intervals (Boyer and Liénard 2007) • Formal, serious, and intense (Rook 1985) • Cultural rituals often presented as compulsory, given a particular situation (Boyer and Liénard 2007), but may also involve customized elements (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991)
Development	• Learning and automation increase through repeated trial and error (Murray and Häubl 2007) • As people repeat actions, decision making recedes, and actions come to be cued by the features of the context (Pascoe and Wood 2007) • Anchored in a neurobiological process of action memory (Engelkamp 1998)	• Over time, with increasing frequency and dosage • Increasing levels of sensitization and counteradaptation to the stimuli leading to spiraling distress and the addiction cycle (Koob and Le Moal 1997)	• Learned over time, similar to habits. Gradual calibration through cultural mimicry (Boyer and Liénard 2007) • Culturally enforced (collective rituals—Levy 1981; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991) • Periodicity linked to calendrical event (Otnes and McGrath 1994; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991)
Outcomes	• Cognitive efficiency (Knight 1999; Wood, Quinn and Kashy 2002) • Learning of motor skills (Brashers-Krug, Shadmehr, and Bizzi 1996) • Ease and smoothness of task performance (Shadmehr and Holcomb 1997)	• Lack of rational motivation (O'Guinn and Faber 1989) • Inability to evaluate one's responsibility in external events (Boyer and Liénard 2007) • Lack of social approval • State of dependence	• Adherence to script, sometimes rigid (Boyer and Liénard 2007), sometimes negotiated (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991) • Expressive, symbolic activity • May become compulsive (Boyer and Liénard 2007)
Potential "risks"	• Reduced awareness of deliberation (Verplanken 2006) • Can lead to satiation or boredom requires intervention to break (Verplanken and Wood 2006)	• Pathology neuroadaptation (Shaffer 1999) • Can lead to feelings of enslavement (Hirschman 1992) • Requires therapy to "break" (Hirschman 1992)	• Similar to habits, can lead to stereotypical, rigid, and irrational behaviors (Boyer and Liénard 2007) • Can trigger resistance to obligatory nature and normative expectations (Marcoux 2009) • Can develop into obsessive compulsive disorders
Consumption exemplar	• Baseline food habits (Khare and Inman 2006)	• Alcoholism (Hirschman 1992) • Compulsive consumption (O'Guinn and Faber 1989) • Pathological gambling (Shaffer 1999)	• Grooming behavior (Rook 1985) • Gift giving (Giesler 2006) • Thanksgiving celebrations (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991)

The third general category of previously studied reconsumption types is ritualistic reconsumption. Whether personal or collective, viewed from cultural anthropological, ethological, or cognitive psychological perspectives, rituals entail "the repeated enactment of the same action or gesture, as well as reiterations of the same utterances" (Boyer and Liénard 2007, 598). Ritualistic reconsumption consists of an episode sequence of behaviors that tend to be repeated at predictable intervals (Rook 1985). They are often guided by recurring calendrical events, such as birthdays (Otnes and McGrath 1994) and holidays (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991), and often entail an element of formality or mystery as in religious ceremonies or exaltation in high aesthetic experiences. Rituals share some characteristics with habits, such as their regularity, and some with addictions, as their stereotypy, rigidity, repetition, and lack of rational motivation or social approval may evolve into OCD (Boyer and Liénard 2007). Consumers sometimes resist the often obligatory nature of cultural or calendrical rituals and the constraints associated with their normative expectations (Marcoux 2009). Because rituals mainly represent an expressive, symbolic activity, many contemporary consumption rituals contain purposive and customized elements where consumers actively shape and reshape the personal, social, or cultural meaning of the consumption object(s) on which the rituals center (Otnes and Lowrey 2004).

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Table 1 makes clear that the extant research on the psychology of reconsumption in consumer information processing and behavioral decision theory has mostly focused on those reconsumption experiences that are frequent, regular, and mostly passive, paying less attention to volitional reconsumption. Informed by economic theory, psychology, and neuroscience, researchers have shown that reconsumption experiences are linked to more efficient decisions and choices. As reconsumption behaviors become automatic, they can lead to the development of habits that save consumers cognitive resources but also potentially trigger addictive and obsessive reconsumption cycles where volition is completely absent. From a clinical standpoint, breaking with an addiction or treating OCD requires relearning or unlearning a response to particular stimuli. For instance, therapies to resolve anxiety disorders such as post–traumatic stress disorder require behavioral treatment to extinguish responses to cues that had been associated with trauma (Wessa and Flor 2007). Similarly, many psychosocial treatments for OCD rely on cognitive behavioral therapies in which individuals gradually expose themselves to OCD-related anxiety or discomfort and then resist ritualizing (Moore, Allard and Franklin 2006). But some say that successfully changing people's habits requires that consumers understand and consciously avoid the environmental cues that trigger habitual behaviors (Verplanken and Wood 2006). In other words, the reconsumption experience must become volitional.

Temporal Factors in Reconsumption Choices

Research on decision-making and choice models imply that reconsuming is informed and affected by prior consumption, thus prefacing that reconsumption experiences are temporally entrenched. Some researchers argue that people enjoy the status quo. Samuelson and Zeckhauser (1988, 8) define the status quo effect as the tendency to maintain "one's current or previous decision. Faced with new options, decision makers often stick with the status quo alternative, for example, to follow customary company policy, to elect an incumbent to still another term in office, to purchase the same product brands, or to stay in the same job." In other words, having made a decision, people tend to repeat it. This "inertia" is reflected in classic models of consumer choice, where previous choices reinforce subsequent ones (Bawa 1990). Yet, choice modelers also recognize that preference reduction and satiation may lead instead to variety seeking or the desire for novelty (Chintagunta 1999; Papatla and Krishnamurthi 1992). As a result, dynamic choice models allow variability in consumers' tendencies to exhibit inertia or variety-seeking behavior (Bawa 1990).

Although it acknowledges and captures the interdependencies between choices made at different points in time, the choice modeling approach cannot explain what motivates consumers to want to repeat a given experience and how previous experiences shape subsequent ones. Furthermore, although researchers on decision making have noted that hedonic stimuli are less subject to sensitization and satiation than to more mundane stimuli that lose their intensity over time (Frederick and Loewenstein 1999; Redden 2008; Wathieu 2004), they have not provided an explanation for why this may be. Answering these questions about volitional reconsumption requires a different, experiential approach, which will be the premise of this research.

The Interplay of Self and Object in Reconsumption

The interplay between self and object is a central tenet of Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould and Thompson 2005) and the role of consumption in identity construction and expression has a long and rich history in consumer research. For instance, research has shown not only that possessions are used to extend one self's outward, onto the object (Belk 1988), but that they may also be assimilated inward, into one's self (Fernandez and Lastovicka 2011). Since volitional reconsumption involves a repeated interaction with an object, the experience will not only shape the meaning of the object but also the identity of the consumer (Ahuvia 2005; Lastovicka and Sirriani 2011). But, because existing research has focused on more continuous forms of consumption, such as possessions or brands with which consumers constantly or frequently interact, it does not illuminate the self-object dynamics within and between reconsumption experiences that are discrete over time.

Art literature offers some insights on these types of reconsumption, because highly aesthetic objects are generally not consumed continually. Aesthetic experiences of all types are affected by repetition and the rhythm it generates, both within a single experience and across several experiences. One of repetition's classic functions in art is both to invoke the audience's past experience and memory and to establish expectations of recurrence and continuity into the future (Levy 1996). When artists repeat visual or musical elements, they engage time and simultaneously set up reverberations of prior use (memory) and suggest the impossibility of their full retrieval (loss). Levy (1996, 79) suggests that "these applications in the suspension of closure and the marking of time establish a sense of organic continuity and outward growth" that brings pleasure to the viewer. Reconsumption of the same piece of art brings "recurrent pleasure" (Burke 1931, 1968, 35) because the artist has created both desires and resolution and, in reexperiencing the art, the audience knows both the desires and the resolution. Even when children know a story well, they enjoy hearing it again and again (Peracchio 1992). This repetition reinforces their knowledge of it, enables showing their parents that they know it, often correcting the reader for any deviation from the accuracy of the retelling. Some communications theorists have argued that the predictability of emotional arousal explains why television viewers enjoy genres and programs that are riddled with predictability (Gitlin 1985) and why they are drawn to reruns (Tannenbaum 1985). But are volitional reconsumption experiences sought solely for their

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predictability? And do repeated hedonic experiences always yield the same satisfactory outcomes?

EMERGING MODEL AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The literature reviewed so far suggests that underlying the reconsumption experience are the temporal interconnectedness and the relationship between object and self. The temporal element, referenced in the literature on decision making and choice, reflects the linkages across consumption experiences, with previous experiences likely affecting subsequent ones. But this literature does not provide insights into the nature of the lived reexperience. Our research thus aims to identify how this temporal interconnectedness is revealed in hedonic experiences that consumers chose to repeat and how reconsumption experiences are similar or different from previous ones.

The literature on identity and consumption in general and on aesthetic works in particular also announces that reconsumption experiences will engage the interconnected entities of the reconsuming self and the reconsumed object. Thus another objective of our research is to identify how object and self-foci shape the motivations for and the nature and outcomes of the hedonic reconsumption experience.

Finally, given the temporal interconnectedness of conceptions of one's identity (Bartes and Urminksy 2011), our research aims to uncover how the temporal and focal dimensions interact in molding the reconsumption experience and its outcomes. The goal is to develop deeper understanding of the phenomenological experience of volitional reconsumption within the broader framework depicted in figure 1.

FIGURE 1

THE DIMENSIONS OF RECONSUMPTION

METHOD

To illuminate the phenomenology of volitional reconsumption, we conducted a series of interviews across three types of hedonic reconsumption experiences, namely, rereading a book (Bettelheim 1975; Levy 1998), rewatching a movie (Agassi 1978; Collins, Hand, and Linnell 2008), and revisiting a particular geographic site (Hughes and Morrison-Saunders 2002). Several participants brought up the reconsumption of television (TV) series as well (Gitlin 1985; Tannenbaum 1985; Weispfenning 2003).

Selection of Reconsumption Objects

We selected consumption objects characteristic of hedonic consumption but with differences in form and materiality. A place is an epistemic object, in the sense that it is materially elusive (Zwick and Dholakia 2006) and might change over time, providing physical nuances that may alter the reconsumption experience, as studies of repeat tourism suggest (Hughes and Morrison-Saunders 2002). A book, in contrast, is a physical object, the tangibility of which imbues it with personal stories (Epp and Price 2010). The same may apply to the physical form of a movie, through its DVD box and jacket, although several of our participants owned the movie or TV series in digital form. A book may also be experienced in different formats; in one case in our study, the reconsumption was of an audio book, and the participant had listened to the same book in different languages. Books and movies are portable, hence also adding notions of spatiality and locale to the experience. A movie may be experienced in different settings—viewed at home, at a theater, or on a computer, on a small screen or on a large screen, with or without sound enhancements. Movies and places may be consumed individually or collectively, whereas books, with the exception of children books, are mostly consumed individually. The objects selected also differ in the amount of effort their consumption requires. Rewatching a single episode of a television series may take as little as 22 minutes, but rewatching a movie may require hours, and rereading a book or a series of books, as several of our participants reported doing, requires a still longer time commitment. Revisiting places may also require different degrees of effort and cost, whether the revisited locale is nearby or distant.

Our study is concerned with reconsumption experiences that are perceived by the participant as similar to prior consumption experiences. We asked about the three contexts of movies, places, and books but did not direct our participants' choices therein. This strategy added a level of complexity to our data but enriched the insights for what volitional reconsumption means to people. Some participants opted to discuss their reconsumption of the same story in book form and in movie form, because this was a reconsumption experience to them.

Methodology

Interviews were conducted in the tradition of the phenomenological interview of Thompson, Locander, and Pollio (1989). The data were collected and analyzed in tandem,

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following Glaser and Strauss (1967), so that each successive interview was guided by an analysis of the previous ones.

Participants. The initial participants were recruited at a community center in New Zealand, using a poster advertising a "research study about doing things again or repeating an experience" and offering a $30 gift certificate for participating. Subsequent participants were found through snowballing, and recruitment continued until reaching theoretical saturation. The final sample included 23 individuals, with a broad cross-section of ages, genders, and cultural backgrounds (see table 2).

Procedures. Interviews were conducted informally in a convenient place (a local coffee shop or park) and consisted of an open discussion about what the reexperience was, how it came about, what the respondent was thinking and feeling about it, and so on. In line with phenomenological interviewing practices (Thompson et al. 1989), the interviews began with general questions designed to trigger a first-person narrative of the reconsumption experience (e.g., "Please tell me about a recent experience of rereading a particular book"). Participants were encouraged to provide contextual details for their reconsumption experiences and to elaborate on them. When the reconsumption experience was linked to a tangible object, such as a book or a movie on DVD or VHS, the interview was conducted with the item on hand.

As shown in table 2, most interviews tapped into more than one kind of reconsumption experience. Often, the conversations naturally advanced from one subject to another because of relationships between books, movies, and places or because the topics discussed overlapped in some ways. For instance, after explaining the significance of a book they had read several times, several participants went on to discuss how they experienced similar emotions with movies they had also watched several times or with TV series set in the same geographic area or to describe their actual visit to a place first experienced via a book or a movie adapted from a book. Sometimes participants brought up other reexperiences such a remarriage or the birth of a second child, comparing them to the reconsumption experiences previously discussed. The 203 single-spaced pages of transcripts served as the raw data for interpretation.

Analytic Strategy. The analysis used the grounded theory method (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Both researchers individually read each transcribed interview, noting specific themes that they interpreted from the data. Using the constant comparison method (Glaser and Strauss 1967), we explored differences and similarities within and across transcripts to determine if the data chunks represented common themes and/or patterns (Wallendorf and Belk 1989), leading to refinement and deepening of the categorization. Once we reached a comprehensive interpretation (Thompson et al. 1989), we began a process of dialectical tacking (Geertz 1979), moving back and forth between our findings and the relevant literature to develop a meaningful understanding of the reconsumption experience (Spiggle 1994).

TABLE 2

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Participant			Reconsumption experience discussed			
Name	Age and gender	Cultural background	Movie	TV series	Book	Place
Bernice	Late teens, F	New Zealander	X		X	X
Brian	Early 20s, M	American			X	
Genevieve	Early 60s, F	English	X	X	X	
Gwenn	Late 40s, F	New Zealander				X
Lance	Late 30s, M	American	X		X	
Laura	Late teens, F	New Zealander	X			X
Lynette	Early 60s, F	New Zealander	X		X	
Marian	Early 30s, F	Belgian				X
Nadine	Mid 30s, F	New Zealander			X	X
Naomi	Late 20s, F	German	X		X	X
Natalie	Early 30s, F	German	X		X	X
Nelson	Late 80s, M	American	X	X	X	X
Ngaio	Late 20s, F	Maori New Zealander	X	X		X
Norman	Early 30s, M	New Zealander	X			
Rajini	Late 20s, F	Thai	X			
Raymond	Late 50s, M	French	X			X
Sandra	Early 20s, F	Dutch	X	X	X	
Shreya	Early 20s, F	Canadian/Indian	X	X		X
Thad	Early 40s, M	American		X	X	X
Tim	Early 20s, M	New Zealander	X	X		
Vince	Early 50s, M	New Zealander		X	X	X
Wesley	Mid 30s, M	American	X	X	X	X
Xavier	Mid 60s, M	New Zealander	X			X
Yvonne	Early 50s, F	American		X		

NOTE.—F = female; M = male.

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DIMENSIONS OF THE RECONSUMPTION EXPERIENCE

The narratives reveal the temporal and focal dimensions of the reconsumption experience. Reconsuming creates an awareness of a conjectural link between one's experience and past and future experiences, hence engaging time. The repeated experiences are linked together emotionally, providing a form of affective resonance catalyzed by the reconsumed object: as illustrated by Lynette's encounter with her *Bridges of Madison County* book mentioned earlier, coming in spatial contact with the object of reconsumption ignites the emotional outcomes of previous experiences and those reverberate throughout the reexperience. In addition to the temporal dimension, reconsumption experiences may focus outward, on the object or the broader social context in which it is embedded (Zwick and Dholakia 2006), or inward, on the self. This section documents the dominant categories of volitional reconsumption along these temporal and focal dimensions (fig. 1).

Primary Temporal Orientations

Whether stated explicitly or expressed in more implicit ways, some volitional reconsumption experiences are more oriented toward the past, others more toward the future. The temporal orientation of the reconsumption experience takes account of the motivation for going back, what is derived from the repetition, its expectations of what it may bring, and the outcomes that it does bring. Oriented toward the past, participants express the need to go back to previous experiences, to reaffirm or consolidate memories, to validate a certain feeling or belief. That emphasis has the character of nostalgia or wistfulness, a yearning for a Paradise Lost, and may reflect feelings of depression. Yet, the desire for validation or reaffirmation of previous experiences is not always motivated backward, and some accounts of reexperience often implicitly signal a desire to move forward, to build, expand on, or correct previous experiences. We refer to primarily backward-oriented reconsumption as regressive and primarily forward-oriented reconsumption as progressive.

Regressive Reconsumption. This orientation toward the past is akin to what Kierkegaard (1893) referred to as backward repetition or recollection, and it is driven by memories of past experiences. The regressive reconsumption experience is motivated by a desire to replicate a previous experience, to return to a former state. Freud (1882) referred to the tendency to return to a previous stage of development or functioning as regression. He viewed this basic tendency to achieve instinctual gratification or to escape instinctual tension by returning to earlier modes and levels of gratification when later and more differentiated modes fail or involve intolerable conflict. Regressive reconsumption is the result of a disruption of equilibrium at a later phase of development and is motivated by an avoidance of the anxieties or hostilities involved in these later stages. Previous consumer researchers have documented such past-oriented motivations as driven by age or individual differences in proneness to nostalgia (Holbrook 1993). Nostalgic consumption experiences are motivated by the desire to retrieve one's personally experienced past (Davis 1979; Wildschut et al. 2006). They associate certain products with often temporally distant but emotionally charged memories (Holbrook and Schindler 2003).

Genevieve's account of *Ballet Shoes*, a book she first read when she was 8 years old, is typical of regressive reconsumption. The book and its illustrations remind her of her little sister and she remembers "how it made (her) really happy as a little girl." Here she recounts her first reexperience when she bought a copy of the book at age 54: "I sat in my chair one day and I just read it from start to finish and I did nothing else that day and just remembering certain parts of it, some parts made me very happy, some made me sad and I had a sniffle over it. I remembered how much I'd enjoyed reading all the lovely bits and I still get it out and read it again and again because I love it." She finds the book moving and absorbing and enjoys the rearousal of her mixed feelings. But overall, few of our participants brought up purely regressive volitional reconsumption experiences. Sandra refers to her rereading of *Oliver Twist* as "childish" but does not belabor it. Lynette's experience of the *Bridges of Madison County* has all the ingredients of nostalgia: the annotation in the book reminds her of her now deceased uncle who gave it to her when she was a teenager. Yet, her rereadings of the book do not reflect a yearning for the past as her experience transcends time, a subject we will return to.

Progressive Reconsumption. When the explicit goal of the reconsumption experience is to start anew or to correct it, the orientation is toward the future. Unlike regressive reconsumption, progressive reconsumption is open to the possibility of change and motivated by the desire to affirm, confirm, or disconfirm an impression left by previous experiences. As such, it is more akin to what Kierkegaard (1893) called genuine repetition: the forward orientation is a matter of choice and will that allows one to consciously reorient one's relation to actuality and that opens future possibilities (Gregor 2005). The forward outlook is evident in Brian's account of *Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*, the self-help book that allowed him to get out of a period of depression and that he rereads to help him further "improve" himself. The forward-looking motivation of progressive reconsumption surfaced also in Xavier's direct comparisons of the activities he engaged in with his first and second wife. In deciding to get married a second time, after 7 years during which he "had some time to think on my own," he consciously appraised what his future would be in a new relationship. His first wife did not appreciate the outdoors. Meeting someone who, unlike his first wife, thoroughly enjoyed walking along the same beautiful New Zealand beaches made him realize that he could get invested again in a marriage, and his reexperiences of these places opened with new possibilities.

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The conscious awareness involved in this forward-looking use of the experience allows progressive reconsumption to be therapeutic. As Brian states himself, rereading his special book "release[s] myself of those fears and anxieties." Indeed, by allowing the forming of new meanings and new perspectives on that which has occurred, psychotherapists view the repetition of an experience as useful to purge that experience of its emotional excesses, a psychoanalytical concept called *abreaction* (Freud 1882). The reexperience allows one to become conscious of repressed or suppressed traumatic events. It has led the way to abreaction therapy, where patients are helped to reenact the experience in a controlled environment, for instance, to resolve post–traumatic stress disorder, characterized by the persistent reexperience of a traumatic event (Wessa and Flor 2007)—that is, not merely remembering it, but seeming to undergo it again in a vivid and emotional mental reenactment. Lynette uses her *Bridges of Madison County* book for abreaction. There are "just times when I'm feeling a bit low for some reason, I need to read that book, have a real good cry, and get it all out of my system and, I don't know, it just does it for me." The book makes her cry and allows her to purge the excess of sadness.

A slightly different form of therapy through progressive reconsumption was the reexperience of both Vince and Nelson. Nelson, now a widower, chose to revisit Florence and Siena, towns he had visited 40 years prior, with his wife and two young children. Revisiting the sites, hotels, and restaurants he had enjoyed many decades ago with his family was "a kind of pilgrimage, a sentimental journey" that allowed him to "sadly mourn the loss of [his wife and son], missing them more vividly," but it was mostly a conscious attempt to try "to reconcile myself to this time of my life." This is similar to Vince's account, who, after 5 years of widowhood, has "quite deliberately been revisiting some places that [he] visited when [his] wife was alive." He did not want to go back to those places until he was "able to face going back to places that she and I enjoyed." His account of these volitional reexperiences as "painful and refreshing" reflects his use of reconsumption as a self-induced cognitive behavioral therapy in which he gradually exposes himself to the places that were associated with his wife and works through his grief (Moore et al. 2006). These reexperiences were not only affected by the nostalgic desire to reexperience the past but also by the conscious reappraisal of their current and future situation. Allowing themselves the reexperience marked their recovery from bereavement: not by providing closure but instead by allowing them to "redefine and reintegrate themselves into life" (Feifel 1977) and coming to terms with their new and future existence (Balk 2004). Sometimes progressive reconsumption takes the form of an enhanced or regained consciousness and appreciation of otherwise habitual and unnoticed reexperiences. Gwenn relates several such accounts in her descriptions of places in her own city that visits from out-of-town friends or her own deliberative conscious awareness prompt her to realize that "we sort of take things for granted but, looking out at it, Auckland City is quite a beautiful city." She explains that every night on her drive home, when the sea and marina appear in front of her eyes, at the turn of the road, she "feels so lucky living there." She emphasizes this further: "Yeah, stone cold sober and look out and think 'you know, what a beautiful place. I am so lucky!'" The progressive characteristic of volitional reconsumption is a key difference with habitual or addictive forms: being (or breaking) free from the unconscious cycle of repetition allows people to regain control over their emotions and behaviors (Pally 2007). In Freud's terms it allows the unconscious to become conscious and to move forward.

Primary Focal Orientations

In addition to the regressive/progressive element, the reconsumption differs in whether it is focused on the object, the self, or other people, and whether the response is directed inward or outward. An outward focus centers on the consumption object, which can involve the broader, social context in which it is embedded (Zwick and Dholakia 2006), whereas an inward focus emphasizes one's self through the consumption experience.

Reconstructive Reconsumption. Reconstructive consumption is motivated by a desire to refresh or reconstruct one's memory of the object experienced. The willingness and ability to reconstruct is due to the realization that memory has evanesced, that one has forgotten, and thus that one can rediscover. For instance, Ngaio's rewatching of the TV series *Battle Star Galactica* offers a satisfying blend of recognition of some events she remembers and a freshness of correcting and expanding her own observation and understanding: "I think 'Gosh that's familiar,' and I think 'does he end up dead?' Then you watch the next episode and I think, 'Oh I remember this one' and I think 'how come I can't remember how it finished?' or 'I don't remember that happening in the middle of it, I don't remember her, who's she, she's new.'" Reconstruction may also be sought when consumers attempt to correct a previous missed or incomplete experience, such as when Norman gives movies a second chance.

When consumers seek an exact replication of the original object, the reconstructive reconsumption experience is anchored solely on the past and only succeeds if it is true to the original object. For instance, Lance did not want to purchase or watch the remastered DVDs of the Star Wars Trilogy, because "those aren't the original versions, I'm going to wait until they do the original versions." And he was "kind of angered by that," and indeed waited patiently 6 years.

The satisfaction of the reconstructive reconsumption experience thus lies in the pleasure of rediscovering and restoring in memory the object that was partially forgotten. This is promoted by the nature of human memory as not merely a reproduction of past experience but rather a complex reconstruction by which we give meaning to our experiences, based both on what we knew before the expe-

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rience transpired and what we learned afterward (Bartlett 1932). People's memory of prior experiences, especially hedonic ones, is typically inaccurate or incomplete, because it relies on a combination of basic characteristics, such as peak and end intensities (Varey and Kahneman 1992) and pattern or trend (Ariely 1998), rather than on a judgment of the whole. What remains encoded in memory following a hedonic experience is a subset of "gestalt moments" (Ariely and Carmon 2000) rather than a complete and accurate representation. A large stream of research within cognitive psychology has demonstrated that the memory system mixes fact with interpretation in such a way that they become indistinguishable, often leading to the development of false memories (Loftus and Pickrell 1995).

Many of our participants embrace the fact that their memories might be imperfect and are in fact motivated to remedy this by reinvesting time and energy in reconsuming. The reconstruction may tack back and forth between the actual memory of the past experience and the incorporation of new knowledge and insights acquired since. Sometimes the reconstructive experience takes on added levels of complexity and depth by design, as consumers actively work to enrich and embellish their reconsumption experience. For instance, Shreya enhances her rewatching of Seinfeld episodes by first watching the "Inside Look" on the DVD to get information on the production aspects of the episode, insights on the jokes, and tricks used to create the plots. For her, this additional information "really adds importance to the whole episode because it took so much time to film but it was only like a 30-second thing in that whole episode." In a similar fashion, Vince reads up on historical issues and comes back to the novels to critically assess their veracity and accuracy. Lance, a discerning movie connoisseur and critic, enjoys tacking back and forth between filmic and written renditions of stories: "I think what it gives, what the film gives you going in, if you see the film before reading the book, or after reading the book and then rereading the book, is you kind of have this rough idea of the story line and then every now and then the book, you know if it's not the same, you're like 'Oh wow. This didn't happen in the movie. Why didn't this happen? This is kind of cool.' So in some ways it kind of helps facilitate maybe a deeper understanding of it than you had before." Each reexperience of the story, in different formats, makes strong demands on his emotional and intellectual resources and enriches his overall understanding and appreciation of the story, while at the same time sharpening his critical skills.

Just like different movie renditions, rewatching sets of shows or rereading series of books is a particularly valuable experience because it allows consumers to observe the evolution in retrospect, to perceive the character development, or to appreciate the author's writing or directing style that may be less apparent to first-time consumers. This was visible in Sandra's rereadings of *Twilight* as well as Nadine's cycling through her five favorite authors. Reconstructing the consumption object in one's mind is a rewarding exercise in its own right.

Relational Reconsumption. Relational reconsumption experiences are focused on how they affect one's relationships with other people, the human context that anchors reconsumption. They may renew the communal nature of the experience. Gwenn talks about visiting her girlfriend in Melbourne and tells how her friend reserves for her a walk around a park, noting that, although she lives nearby, "she only goes there with me. It's something we do." This special attention exemplifies the communion they have as good friends and reinforces Gwenn's desire to experience the place again. Marian revisits New York with her husband because the city is emblematic of where they met. She especially enjoys revisiting Central Park, where he proposed to her. They enjoy revisiting restaurants and cafes that they used to patronize together when they lived there. The communal reexperiencing allows them to commemorate and relive previous and precious moments. Lynette enjoys rewatching *Four Weddings and a Funeral* with her son because the two of them "were the only ones in the family that loved this"; the reconsumption experience is a notable communal moment for the two of them, especially since Lynette realizes that teenage "boys don't always want to share with their mum" and also because it excludes others who do not appreciate the film as they do. Now that her son has moved away, that interpersonal motivation is gone, and she does not watch it as much on her own.

Sometimes a motivation for the reconsumption experience is sharing with new people. Ngaio enjoys driving her friends to the Strawberry Corner for "the best strawberries in the world," and she is comforted by the fact that "I have not had one person yet say 'oh no, they weren't very good.'" Natalie also seeks to infuse others with her own appreciation of movies; she enjoys the validation of her own judgment when her friends "loved it as well." Raymond loves to make others discover his favorite spots on the coast. To make sure that newcomers' first experience is as rewarding as his first experience and subsequent reexperiences, he adapts the visit to them, for example, by driving instead of walking along the coast if the visitor's physical ability prevents it. These adaptations and the unwavering positive response from the visitors he brings continually enhance his own appreciation of the place.

While social validation encourages further reconsumption, invalidation did not appear to discourage it. Lynette was hoping to engage her husband in rewatching *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, but, quickly noting "he could not relate to it," she did not try again. This failure to share did not alter her own personal feelings for the movie, and in fact the same failed sharing experience occurred when she attempted to share her special book, *The Bridges of Madison County*, with her mother and then with her husband. Neither enjoyed it, but she simply dismissed their lack of enthusiasm with "wasn't mum's cup of tea . . . she just didn't like that sort of love story" and "he just thought it was a bit silly because it's not a man's book maybe." This gives rise to reconsumption management strategies such as those described by Lance, who, although he likes "quirky movies,"

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has learned to carefully select those he shares with friends to maintain the equilibrium in his and his friends' reactions. Or, instead, his reconsumption is enjoyed as a solitary pleasure.

Reflective Reconsumption. Reflective reconsumption experiences are characterized by a focus inward, on the reconsuming self. They are marked by an openness to review previous interpretations and to revisit and reconsider them. This compare and contrast mode allows one to meditate and grow.

Naomi's rewatchings of the movie *Message in a Bottle* are reflective. Reconsuming the sad story of two lovers who cannot live together because one is dying allows her to work on her unresolved issues. The movie reminds her of a previous boyfriend who broke up with her, whereas she saw them spending the rest of their lives together. Unlike other movies, this story allows each reexperience to mine deeper into her own issues, because, even though "you exactly know what's coming up, there's so many layers and every time you rewatch it you find a few new things that you haven't really thought about before." The movie allows her to consciously access her past and vicariously and safely reenact her failed relationship (van der Kolk 1989). The reconsumed movie represents a point of "personal fixity" against which she can release her emotions and work through the traumatic experience of her breakup (Mather and Marsden 2004, 208). Naomi's account of the way she uses this reconsumption experience is akin to therapies to treat post–traumatic stress whereby "as people become aware of more and more elements of the traumatic experience, they construct a narrative that 'explains' what happened to them" (van der Kolk 1996, 289). The movie presents a ready, unmovable narrative that allows her to organize her own traumatic breakup experience and to eventually come to terms with it.

Xavier's rereadings of the Bible are exemplary of reflective reconsumption. A church minister and devout Christian, he preaches from the Bible and is conscious that his rereadings lead to new interpretations:

> It's a special book and there's so much in there behind it. It expresses his [God's] words, what he wants to tell us, it's sort of like a manual for how we should live and so when you read it and I give sermons of course, and preach to people and we use the same text over and over again, but every time I read them and I talk about it, I learn something different. You think about it too, you meditate on it and think about these things and you pray about things to and ask for guidance to ask us to understand the Bible more. So therefore we pick out more, we learn more from it and it is a book that we just read over and over again and so we do reexperience it.
>
> *So your sermons may be very different even though they are based on the same passage?*
>
> Mmmm, they can be. For instance with the church sometimes we've come . . . the particular church that I go to, we've come to see that some of the things we're taught from the Bible were wrong and that was because of the way we interpreted the Bible, the text, and we came to see that's wrong. That's not the way it should be interpreted and so we change. So I've now spoken on the same text from a totally different angle. You're not happy about that, but you have to grow. We have to grow in understanding and knowledge. I believe God helps us to see it a different way, I need to follow what he's saying and admit that I was wrong. You've got to admit that you were wrong. It's not easy. You have egg all over your face maybe if you've preached something publicly and then you have to take it back and say "That was wrong." But we have to do that if we've proved something to be wrong we have to change and teach it a different way now.

Xavier considers the Bible a special case because of its foundational character and implications for human living. He also realizes that, while his own rereadings allow new interpretations to surface, other churches may not welcome this fluidity in meaning. For him, the oscillations between his past, present, and, implicitly, future readings and understandings of the same texts are edifying and a sign of personal growth, although he recognizes the difficulty in coming to terms with previous, "wrong" interpretations, especially given the public nature of his readings. He reveres the permanence of the text itself and recognizes the sometimes difficult social implications of his readings, but hails the evolution of his own comprehension of it. Theologians have noted that religious scriptures often require this type of "interlocutory practice" to negotiate fidelity and difference to the texts (Adam 2001, 29).

Reflective reconsumption exemplifies one of the functions of repetition, noted by Heidegger (1953): repetition enables one to achieve an understanding of one's personal past, and a reconsumed object allows the personal past itself to emerge. Seidel (1964), interpreting Heidegger, refers to this process as a kind of "redredging" through which one uncovers and brings to the surface hidden and original meanings that have remained embedded in one's personal history (Heidegger 1953, 122). The interlocution between self and object of consumption, but also between past, present, and future experiences, conveys the dynamic process that underlies the phenomenon of reconsumption to which we now turn.

RECONSUMPTION AS A DYNAMIC PROCESS

Although there may be primary orientations in time and focus, as reviewed above, our participants' accounts of reconsumption experiences reveal that backward and forward, inward and outward orientations are not mutually exclusive and that reconsumption is a dynamic process whereby consumers navigate along the temporal and focal dimensions. Through the volitional reconsumption of a seemingly identical consumption object, consumers engage both time and the evolving self. Two metacharacteristics of reconsumption experiences, experiential control and hyperresponsiveness,

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emerged across our participants' narratives. Experiential control provides consumers an ability to guide the temporal orientation of reconsuming, to engage time between and across reconsumption experiences. Our data reveal that, no matter what their primary motivations, as consumers reengage the same consumption object, they are hyperresponsive to it, to those who may be experiencing it with them, and to themselves. In this section we present evidence for the roles of these two characteristics in navigating the focal and temporal dimensions of volitional reconsumption experiences and then discuss the emotional efficiency and existential understanding that arise from these temporal and focal dynamics. The characteristics, dynamic process, and outcomes of the volitional reconsumption experiences that emerged in our research are summarized in figure 2.

FIGURE 2

THE DYNAMIC RECONSUMPTION PROCESS

Characteristics of Volitional Reconsumption Experiences

Experiential Control. Experiential control refers to consumers' ability to navigate within and across reconsumption experiences and regulate their temporal unfolding. It is depicted in figure 2 as an element that consumers bring to the reconsumption experience and that affects the temporal dynamics therein. The sense of familiarity, knowing and predictability of reconsumption experiences offers control over the passing of time. Putting on a previously seen movie or comedy show or reading a previously read book has advantages over trying out something new—beyond the mere fact that one is free to choose to do so. Nadine, an avid reader, cycles through books from her five favorite authors. She finds it more relaxing to pick up a book that she already knows because she gets into the storylines, the plots, and the characters right away. Natalie, a fan of action movies, enjoys their scripted nature and somewhat standard format and predictability and her desire for order and control promotes her reconsumption of movies where "this is always happening in the same way." Our participants often expressed relief at feeling in control of their experience, especially in comparison with the extreme stimulation and rapid changes that affect other aspects of real life where they do not enjoy that level of control (Hacking 1995). The stability afforded by controlled reconsumption experiences contrasts with the increasingly unstable "traditional points of social and personal fixity—church, state, family, linear time" that mark postmodern societies (Mather and Marsden 2004).

Control also emerges in the choice and timing of the reconsumption experience. Books, places, and movies are selected based on one's mood and desire for particular outcomes. Just as Lynette reaches for her special book when she feels down, Yvonne rewatches TV series that provide immediate comfort from seeing characters to whom she feels connected when she "needs a lift," and as soon as there is "a situation where there's a lot of negative tension in the air," Brian pulls out his self-help book. The flow and content of reexperiences is also carefully controlled. Unlike Natalie and Nadine, who say they always reconsume the entire experience from start to finish, Sandra rereads entire series of books such as *Harry Potter* or *Twilight*, but at different speeds: "there are parts where you read slowly and other parts that you skim through quickly, like if you know the good part's coming up." Asked how that works, she further explains, "so, if I'm reading and I'm like oh not this again, skip that and move to a good part." Many of our participants reported such selective reconsumption strategies, as prior knowledge of the content allows control over the delivery of the experience. For instance, Brian only needs to reread "particular spots, maybe just a paragraph or even a couple of lines that are just analogies that really totally make me remember all the things that I've read in the book."

Experiential control is key in preventing overconsumption and maintaining the freshness of the experience. Participants report carefully preventing hedonic erosion by keeping themselves from reconsuming too soon. The conclusion of the reexperience invariably leaves them with the desire to watch or read again but they do not. This cognitive control provides a form of emotional regulation that keeps the reexperience from becoming a routine, habitual experience that loses its appeal or from entering the addictive cycle characterized by lack of control. Sandra is fully aware that "if [she] were to read [the series of books] over and over, one after the other, where I start with the first book, finish with the last one, then start with the first one again right after each other, I think by the third time I'd be really sick of it and stop reading." Yet, the enjoyment of the reconsumption experience is such that it requires a great deal of control to prevent entry into an addictive cycle. Lynette has to "keep [herself] from rereading" her book right after finishing it. Once she even had to separate herself from the book by lending it to a friend.

Experiential control permits the early discontinuation of unsatisfactory reconsumption experiences. There were some instances in our interviews where the reconsumption ex-

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perience failed to deliver the expected rewards and was therefore aborted. Wesley ordered the entire DVD collection of the original *Star Trek* series a few months after immigrating to New Zealand and following the birth of his first child. Remembering fondly his teenage experience and engagement with the series, he excitedly set aside one evening when the box set showed up to begin his reconsumption experience. But, disappointed in the "cheesy ass special effects," he barely watched 5 minutes of the first episode and immediately abandoned his grand plan to rewatch the entire series. The box set remains mostly unwrapped, albeit occupying a prominent place on his bookshelves. The antiquated nature of the special effects was a vivid reminder of how much time had passed but also marked a transition point in his life, helping him come to terms with the necessity to embrace his new identity as both an immigrant and a father (Davis 1979; Wildschut et al. 2006). The reconsumption was abandoned because Wesley realized that the reconstruction of the object through rewatching would ruin his memory of an enjoyable experience. The surfacing of displeasure and tensions within the reconsumption cycle echoes Fournier and Mick's (1999) finding that satisfaction fluctuates over the course of product ownership; by allowing careful reconsumption management, experiential control maximizes the attainment and maintenance of a satisfactory outcome.

Hyperresponsiveness. Wesley's brief reexperience and many of our interviews show that volitional reconsumption experiences are hyperresponsive: they heighten senses and feelings and engage deep processing. The term *hyperresponsiveness* has been used mainly to refer to an intense emotional response, marked by high sensitivity and slow return of emotional arousal to baseline (Henry et al. 2001; Linehan 1993), but we find volitional reconsumption experiences to be hyperresponsive in both emotional and cognitive terms. This second characteristic is represented in figure 2 as pointing to the focal dimension in the framework because it affects how consumers approach the reconsumed experience and the object and self therein. Our participants report feeling awake and aroused as they listen, read, watch, smell especially carefully, especially slowly, especially mindfully. Hypersensitivity is telling in Genevieve's account of her "dozens" of rereadings of *A Place Called Paradise*, the first book she read after immigrating to New Zealand from Scotland 36 years ago. She expresses the almost physical evocation of sensory experience of a book that "describes scenery to perfection" and where she feels "you can smell the kitchen smells" and "the pine trees and you can imagine those perfect mountains and stuff." Each rereading awakens these sensory responses and helps reinforce her appreciation of New Zealand, presumably supporting the decision to immigrate.

Hyperresponsiveness allows consumers to notice details that they might have missed in previous experience, to identify subtleties, and to note differences; these perceptions coalesce into greater appreciation and richer reconsumption experiences. Imbued with an overall feeling of familiarity and comfort brought about by their prior experience, consumers enjoy being reminded of something forgotten or noticing something that previously escaped them. The reexperience allows them to refresh their memory of the past experience, but the recollection is accompanied by the discovery of new details. Tim enjoys rewatching comedies because each re-viewing experience provides him greater insights into the comedic performance. He carefully listens to "how they go about telling (the jokes)" and pays close attention to "everything about them, just like, the timing, the facials, how they do it." Astute readers like Vince and movie connoisseurs like Lance check facts in between reconsumption experiences and go back to the reconsumed object with an even more discerning eye and ear.

Often, they readily compare the reconsumption experience to the first time. Norman, an avid movie watcher, approaches movies differently the first time around. Initially, he is interested in the general storyline, wanting to know "where is this going and what's the outcome maybe." But the first viewing leaves him with questions that he seeks to answer in subsequent viewings. Thus his reconsumptions are motivated by a desire to revisit, to answer those unanswered questions, to carefully re-view and review the scenes, and to assess "whether or not that was actually achievable and, if it was, the stuff they were using." Norman's reconsumption allows him to validate or invalidate the general impressions made by the first viewing. Vince, who prides himself in his personal library of over 7,000 books, is a methodical reader. As he explains in great detail, his reconsumption of fiction books allows him to appreciate not the story but the way the story is told:

> I know how the story goes, I know what happens, I know more or less in what sequence what happens, so I'm reading it for the pleasure of the use of the language and the expressions used and just to refresh my acquaintance with something I enjoy. Rather than only ever enjoying something once, you can enjoy it multiple times.
>
> *And is it the same kind of enjoyment? Would you describe it differently?*
>
> It's possible; you're looking not at what happens in the story but how the story is told. That's to over stress it. You are looking more at how the story is told than what happens in the story. Whereas the first time you read the novel of course, you're also "What happens next?" When you go back to a fiction, you know what happens next unless it's so long since you've read it that you've forgotten precisely what happens, but you're interested in how the story is being told.

Hyperresponsiveness allows each reconsumption experience to be different and novel in its own right. Just as first experiences heighten consumers' senses as they discover new sensations and potentially unexpected outcomes (Abrahams 1986; Arnould and Price 1993), reexperiences stimulate consumers as they rediscover and reclaim (Heidegger 1953) these sensations and outcomes, but they are also newly stim-

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ulating because they uncover other aspects of the experience. Whether it brings up something forgotten or something previously ignored, the evocation and reevocation of elements are reinforcing and keep each reexperience fresh and novel, altogether enriching it.

Outcomes of Volitional Reconsumption Experiences

Our interviews reveal that hyperresponsiveness and experiential control serve as temporal and focal navigational aids in volitional reconsumption experiences. Even though consumers are already familiar with the stories or the places, their hypersensitivity to and level of control over the reconsumption experience bring new or renewed appreciation of both the object of consumption and their reconsuming self. Yet, as Naomi states regarding her second visit to India, "perhaps you have a little bit more eyes for the small little details, but often you can get the same feelings." They allow efficient emotional management, prevent satiation and hedonic erosion, and ultimately facilitate reaching a satisfactory emotional outcome. This section reviews the evidence for the outcomes of the dynamic process that underlies volitional reconsumption experiences: emotional efficiency and existential understanding.

Emotional Efficiency. Across our interviews, we observed that hyperresponsiveness and experiential control optimize the search for and attainment of the emotional outcomes sought in volitional reconsumption. The conscious form of emotional self-regulation that permeated volitional reconsumption experiences allowed participants to influence which emotions they had, when they had them, and how they experienced these emotions (Gross 1999). In other words, consumers were emotionally efficient (Ellis 1994), and emotional efficiency is thus depicted as an outcome emerging from the dynamic reconsumption process in figure 2. Engaged in the reconsumption of a book, movie, or place, consumers anticipate and especially seek out the "emotional peaks" (Bernice), the climax they know is available in their reconsumption experience. Their hyperresponsiveness makes them especially alert to the potential emotional payoff. They seek out and are especially receptive to the cues that trigger the climax; they know what to pay attention to and when to let go. The analogy to sexual climax is vivid in Tim's description of his rewatching favorite stand-up comedy shows: "When you haven't seen it before, you're really like oh, I wonder what's going to come and you just sort of sit back and you're like ok make me laugh, but when you've seen it before and you know the joke's coming and you're like oh man can't wait for this bit, it's coming up, it's coming up, oh there it is. That was good." Emotional efficiency is facilitated by experiential control with consumption management strategies that allow speeding through or skipping the foreplay altogether. Tim "chunks through" the comedy shows, TV series, and movies on his laptop looking for his favorite bits. As his experiential control increases, Tim gets more efficient at this over time, reporting that "I just sort of click through them and, like listening to those particular bits. So the more times I watch it, the less times I actually watch the actual movie." Lynette reports a similar rereading strategy with her *Bridges of Madison County* book: she once marked her favorite parts with sticky notes, and these markers allow her to easily go back and reexperience her selections. She opens up the book to the marked pages and rereads those "lovely little things, lovely little paragraphs or phrases." Her hyperresponsiveness is apparent as she says, "I especially read them, and I especially read them slowly and I especially concentrate and I think, 'that's a lovely phrase.'"

When reaching this emotional climax, participants report being so immersed in the reexperience that they lose track of time and space. Some participants are articulate in their description of this state, like Natalie, who describes her favorite place, where "I just sit there on a bench and just look out on the sea. It's kind of a peaceful place. I just sit on my own and think about things and just get lost there in the scenery and just indulge into dreams and things." But the most telling evidence for this transcendental state emerged not from the words of our participants but from their bodily expressions when describing, or attempting to describe, them. On recounting their reconsumption experiences, participants pause and hold their breath, and they seem to marvel at themselves, unable to explain their becoming so possessed by the reexperience. Our participants were often unable to find the adequate words to explain this arousal: "it just gives you this amazing . . . it's hard to explain, it's an emotional thing. You get an amazing feeling inside. . . . That sounds corny but it's like a feeling inside of you" (Gwenn); "every time it just hits me just as hard and I'm like 'Aww'" (Laura). Unable to verbalize this "always same breathtaking feeling" (Genevieve), participants revert to physical gestures, lifting themselves, and holding their breath, as if letting the emotions envelop and overcome them. This sense of wonder and accompanying bodily experience reveal a form of embodiment where self and object of consumption become one and where the body and also the mind are at equilibrium with their environment (Joy and Sherry 2003; Merleau-Ponty 1945).

Existential Understanding. Our interviews reveal that the dynamic linkages between one's past, present, and future experiences through the reconsumption of an object allow existential understanding (Schrag 1970). Expanding on Miller's notions that consumption objects help create, transform, intensify, or call into question one's identity (2008), we find that reengaging with the same object, even just once, allows a reworking of experiences as consumers consider their own particular enjoyments and understandings of choices they have made. This active process is a way of affirming one's identity, even through differences (Deleuze 1968/1994). As represented in figure 2, existential understanding emerges from the temporally and focally dynamic reconsumption experience. Through repetition, the past becomes understood, and one can discover new meanings, especially when a new inquiry standpoint is adopted. Reconstructing one's

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memory of a reconsumed object or connecting with others through the reconsumption allow the individual to inwardly reflect, and in turn these inward reflections may enable further reconstructing and further connecting. Even a single reconsumption experience can foster these self-reflections. For instance, Nelson relates, "I was just rereading the *Iliad*. It was so different from doing it in high school. I was so moved when Hector says goodbye to his wife; and when Priam begs Achilles for Hector's body, I cried. My life has taught me the meaning of these events." Similarly, Lance's life experiences informed and deepened his interpretations and enjoyment of books like *The Great Gatsby* that he had first read in high school and chose to reread at age 40. This is a form of luxuriating in nodal points in one's life.

In addition to allowing a realization and appreciation that one has changed since a previous experience, the linkage with previous experiences offers continuity across time, as if erasing the time gap between experiences. In "such a fast changing city" as New York, being on the same spot "is sort of an odd moment of continuity," and you "feel like you've never been away" (Marian). The reconsumed object and its constant and satisfactory outcomes provide consumers something permanent and infinite that transcends time (Ritchie 1933). By allowing people to reach back into their history, define their present, and extend into their future, reconsumption can provide a form of "temporal thickness," a suspension of time that is crucial to human psychological development (Leighton 1959) and that is especially valuable given the limited opportunities for contemplative time in modern society (Carù and Cova 2003).

This process echoes philosophers' proposition that repetition is a movement in which one receives a world anew, charged with meaning and possibility (Kierkegaard 1893). This movement provides dynamic possibilities and allows one to "get the world back" at a higher level, ultimately allowing one's consciousness of selfhood. Because life is understood in reverse, but lived forward, the forward movement of repetition establishes a dynamic continuity of the self, a self that is the same, and yet different, and still the same—a self that allows continuity amidst change (Gregor 2005). Since behavior is always in the present, repetition is necessarily dynamic, building on the relationships of the past, present, and future in the mind, and, as Deleuze's essay on *Difference and Repetition* (1968/1994) points out, unearthing existential issues.

Our interviews reveal that, because reconsumption objects represent an "instantaneous cross-section of time" (Merleau-Ponty 1945, 486), they allow consumers an active synthesis of time and serve as catalysts for existential reflection. This is the case for Lynette's *Bridges of Madison County* book and Xavier's Bible. It is also telling in Raymond's description of Le Croisic, a small port town in Brittany, as the place where "I know I can find myself and see things clearly and completely differently (from anywhere else)." He says, repeatedly, that "it works systematically." It is a "safe place" that always brings him what he seeks, even when there may be some constraints, such as unwelcoming weather; the place delivers what he seeks because "it is something you look for and, because you choose it and go seeking for it, you are going to find it." Raymond resists using the words *spiritual* or *retreat*, because he does not like their religious connotation, but many of our participants describe similar processes in such terms: Natalie calls her favorite beach spot a "retreat," and Brian readily refers to his book as the place where "I know I can go to it and find a way to see the light at the end of the tunnel." For them, the reconsumed object is a mental sanctuary that provides solace and reflexivity.

DISCUSSION

Our inquiry was motivated by a desire to understand why people like Lynette actively and consciously seek to repeat consumption experiences. Psychological research to date on reconsumption experiences has been informed by the perspective that reconsuming allows individuals to respond more efficiently and rapidly (Edelman 1989). From an evolutionary perspective, routine and relatively automatic reconsumption is adaptive because little changes in daily lives (Lefèbvre 1968). The research reported in this article offers a different perspective of the reconsumption phenomenon. The reexperiences of books, places, and movies documented in our inquiry were sought not because of the efficiency or automaticity associated with routine purchases but instead because of their richness in meaning, depth, and uplifting abilities. Even though they had previously consumed their book, movie, or place, the consumers studied here do not exhibit habituation (Groves and Thompson 1970), adaptation (Kahneman and Snell 1990), or satiation (Redden 2008): their hedonic utility has not eroded, and their reconsumption provided the same emotional intensity over time.

Our inquiry reveals that the absence of hedonic erosion stems from the experiential control and hyperresponsiveness characteristic of volitional reconsumption experiences. Experiential control allows consumers to select the timing and unfolding of the reexperience, to fast-forward to peak experiences or to quickly drop a reconsumption attempt that does not deliver the desired emotional outcome. The hyperresponsiveness associated with the rediscovery and reevocation of forgotten elements of the experience of both the object and the self through the object prevents experiential satiation or passivity. Hedonic volitional reconsumption engages both time and the evolving self through the reconsumed object in a dynamic process that can be as intense as a novel experience.

The dynamic processes that underlie volitional reconsumption experiences facilitate existential understanding. The reconsumption experience affords consumers richer and deeper insights into the reconsumption object itself, but, through the lens of the reconsumption object, they gain an enhanced awareness of their own growth in understanding and appreciation. The object of reconsumption offers linkages of cross-experiences that allow one to perceive subtle differences, to notice change, or instead to perceive permanence and appreciate continuity. Reconsuming allows one to replicate peak experience or lament the inevitability

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of the passing of time and one's mortality (Deleuze 1968/1994). Reconsuming reopens the past, allowing one to test it and contest it and to discover new meanings when a new standpoint is adopted (Heidegger 1953). Reconsuming allows time to collapse in the reconsumed object where "the future and the past are in a kind of eternal state" (Merleau-Ponty 1945, 478).

Because of its ability to bridge experiences across time, reconsumption presents a welcome alternative from the transience and impermanence of more ephemeral consumption experiences. The links between reconsumption experiences and the temporal dynamics they engage suspend eschatological time, and this transcendence in time enhances consumers' awareness of their thoughts and feelings. We witness consumers who embrace the opportunity to review, revisit, and reappreciate something they have already experienced, hence providing a counterpoint to the often pronounced view that modernity is obsessed with novelty and desire (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003; Bruner 1986) and to postmodern fragmentation (Miller 2008). Because of their inherent temporal dynamics, reconsumption experiences allow individuals to "live prospectively as well as retrospectively" (James 1904, 569), and reconsumed objects connect past, present, and future, thus enabling self-transcendency. In this way, we find that reconsuming can be an extraordinary experience, filled with the emotional luxury of delight, novel sensations, and intellectual insight.

Limitations and Research Agenda for Reconsumption

This is only a first exploration into the nature and purpose of volitional reconsumption. The framework that emerged in the context of hedonic experiences suggests many avenues for further research on any of the elements of reconsumption: the characteristics of consumption objects; consumers' traits and personal conditions; and social and cultural factors that also could affect the dynamics of volitional reconsumption, its characteristics, and its outcomes.

The Focal Object of Reconsumption. The investigation is bound by the hedonic nature of the consumption objects studied. Hedonic consumption is known to arouse emotions, stimulate physical reactions, solicit memories and fantasies, and trigger cognitive development (Lacher and Mizerski 1994), and the intensity and complexity of these responses may have augmented the deep layering of experiences and emotions we witnessed. Still, our interviews show that reconsuming can serve as a "stable site of self-presence" (Mather and Marsden 2004, 208), allowing consumers to revisit and come to terms with their past, or to accept their new identity and progress to another stage of their life. Although psychiatrists and theologians alike have pointed to the difficulty to find such stable sites in an era of saturating media simulation (Hacking 1995; van der Kolk 1996), this inquiry suggests that consumption objects that allow projection and reprojection onto a narrative can serve this role, whether the narrative is prescripted in the object (a book, a movie) or whether the object serves as an anchor for one's personal narrative. Reconsumed objects were not so because they synthesized an identity conflict (Ahuvia 2005) but instead because of their ability to crystalize, affirm, and reaffirm identity, even through differences. Future research should explore other consumption domains to find out what kinds of objects engage one's past, present, and future in this manner.

Our investigation points to the existence of "classics," consumption objects that are reconsumed many times and by many people. Surprisingly, consumer researchers to date have not identified object-specific characteristics that make a classic car, toy, event, tourist destination, film, poem, or novel. Our study provides some elements of answer: *The Lord of the Rings*, in book or movie form, and, of course, sacred texts like the Bible are especially disposed to reconsumption because they trigger basic human emotions and prompt self-reflexivity. Places like a remote sandy beach or a spot high above the clouds allow body and mind to be at equilibrium with their environment and facilitate transcendence in time. Future research could adopt an object-centered approach to identify the inherent ingredients that render objects prone to reconsumption. In a related vein, future research could uncover how a given object becomes timeless or gains broad appeal. Historical analysis, whose aim is to document the longitudinal persistence of phenomena (Smith and Lux 1993), is particularly suited to identify classic consumption objects at the macrolevel, as well as the cultural, societal, and perhaps economic factors that affect the maintenance, fading, or resurgence of certain reconsumption objects.

The Reconsumer. Just as there may be object-specific characteristics, there may be individual characteristics that affect proneness to reconsumption. Much as there are individual differences in variety-seeking tendencies (McAlister 1982; Ratner and Khan 2002), there may be individual differences that affect whether people want to reconsume at all and how they experience reconsumption. Individuals high in variety-seeking behavior may seek out diversity in consumption and resist reconsuming, whereas risk-averse individuals might find reconsumption experiences more soothing because of the familiarity they provide. Individuals who are naturally better at emotional efficiency (Ellis 1994) may have different volitional reexperiences than those who are less inclined. Future research could thus link reconsumption to traits such as innovativeness (Midgley and Dowling 1978), need for uniqueness (Tian, Bearden, and Hunter 2001), or emotional intelligence (Kidwell, Hardesty, and Childers 2008).

Given the role of reconsumption in enhancing existential understanding, future research could investigate how life stages and circumstances affect reconsumption choices and the nature and dynamics of reconsumption experiences. Our inquiry has shown that times of identity transition—prompted by, for example, the loss of significant others, a move to a new country, the birth of a first child, or a second marriage—may trigger reconsumption and affect the dy-

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namics therein. These life crises have been termed "cross-sections of the moment" (Leighton 1959) because they are integrally linked to one's history and to the assessment of the importance of one's present and the anticipation of one's future (Balk 2004). Other triggering events, such as retirement, can prompt consumers to revisit their life narratives (Schau, Gilly, and Wolfinbarger 2009), and this identity work may accentuate the reflective element of reconsumption (Price, Arnould, and Curasi 2000). Consumers in those cross-sections of the moment may be especially receptive to the cues that signal how much or how little they have changed, and it could be that a single reconsumption experience suffices in fostering self-reflexivity.

Based on theories such as socioemotional selectivity (Carstensen, Isaacowitz, and Charles 1999), as people age, they come to view their life span as limited and shift attention from future-oriented goals. Because the nostalgia associated with past experiences diminishes existential threat (Sedikides et al. 2008; Wildschut et al. 2006), regressive forms of reconsumption may be more common at later stages of life. Thus future research could investigate whether life transitions trigger an intensified search for childhood or teenage-era consumption objects.

The Social and Cultural Environment. We recognize that the reconsumption of movies, books, and places is anchored in a broader web of social and cultural notions that may affect the reconsumption experience but cannot be captured in a phenomenological inquiry. Our inquiry revealed some of the social aspects of reconsumption, in particular through what we termed *relational reconsumption*. Their collective reconsumption sustained a sense of continuity across time and generations, cultivating cultural meaning and collective memory (Levy 1981). But the focus on individual narratives of reconsumption experiences only broaches the overarching social and cultural dynamics that likely further color them. Thus, just as there are personal and collective rituals, reconsumption experiences may be personal or collective. Further research, conducted with an anthropological lens typical of Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould and Thompson 2005), would help identify how different individual experiences coalesce in relational reconsumption experiences, such as the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Austin 1981). Given that interpersonal contact may be a main contributor to extraordinary experiences (Arnould and Price 1993), future research should assess whether the dynamics within and across reconsumption experiences are altered by their interpersonal makeup. More research is also warranted to investigate how relational reconsumption may prompt collective reflexivity and shape and maintain a sense of identity within a group or across generations (Price et al. 2000).

Hyperresponsiveness and Experiential Control. The identification of these two metacharacteristics of volitional reconsumption experiences could stimulate the study of factors and conditions that influence their manifestation, maximize the value of a commercial experience, and increase its likelihood of being repeated. In an increasingly co-created world, how can brand experiences be designed to encourage hyperresponsiveness? How is experiential control negotiated in the presence of other consumers or, in the case of services, of providers of the reconsumption experience?

This inquiry draws attention to the links between the conscious and controlled nature of volitional reconsumption experiences and mental health and well-being. Given the prevalence of reconsuming opportunities in daily life, but the often passive and unnoticed instances of habitual or addictive reconsumption, could consumers learn to render otherwise passive and habitual consumption experience more hyperresponsive, experientially controlled, and thus satisfactory? Approached from a volitional reconsumption angle, instead of through the lens of habitual or addictive reconsumption, inquiries into food consumption (Khare and Inman 2006) or alcohol drinking may lead to novel insights about how to help consumers quit unhealthy behaviors or regain control and enjoyment of the foods or drinks they reconsume (Wood and Neal 2009).

CONCLUSION

Turning back to the philosophical discussions on the nature of repetition, our findings align with Deleuze's view that the paradox of repetition is that it only exists "by virtue of the change or difference that it introduces into the mind which contemplates it" (1968/1994, 90). Unlike Deleuze, however, we find that "connections between successive presents" are localizable in reconsumed objects: reconsumption can serve as a "system of replay, resonance and echoes . . . which transcend spatial locations and temporal successions" (83). The reconsumed objects fuel an active synthesis of individualized experiences rather than the passive synthesis of habitual reconsumption, where people merely conform to ordinary daily requirements, of ritualistic reconsumption, where people follow obligatory practices, or of addictive reconsumption, where free will is impaired.

With its emphasis on self-affirmation, renewal, and growth, our account of hedonic volitional reconsumption balances fear-oriented perspectives, where consumption objects are viewed as a protection against existential insecurity (Rindfleisch, Burroughs, and Wong 2009). Unlike the survival motives that drive evolutionary psychology, we find that consumers who chose to repeat hedonic experiences even just once are expressing and affirming their individual experience and its special meanings to them. In this way, hedonic volitional reconsumption is in keeping with the etymology of the word "repetition." Whether regressive, progressive, reconstructive, relational, or reflective, reconsumption is a petition, a form of actively seeking, a way of asking for something from the past, a way of becoming rather than returning.

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