



# ASSOCIATION FOR CONSUMER RESEARCH

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## **A Little Good Goes an Unexpectedly Long Way: Underestimating the Positive Impact of Kindness on Recipients**

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Prosociality increases happiness for givers and receivers, but we find in field and laboratory settings that givers systematically undervalue their positive impact on recipients. Miscalibrated expectations create a barrier to prosociality—to the detriment of one's own, and others', welfare—because expected value guides choices to engage in prosocial behavior.

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# Consumer Misunderstandings

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## **Paper #1: A Little Good Goes an Unexpectedly Long Way: Underestimating the Positive Impact of Kindness on Recipients**

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## **Paper #2: The I Told You So Effect**

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## **Paper #3: Keep Talking: (Mis)Understanding the Hedonic Trajectory of Conversation**

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## **Paper #4: The Road Not Taken: Consumption of Unfamiliar Products Increases Feelings of Self-Discovery and Product Engagement**

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### SESSION OVERVIEW

Nobel Prize-winning economic theory suggests that consumer's choices are guided by an implicit or explicit calculation of expected value (Becker, 1993). However, consumers may sometimes have mistaken expectations. Such misunderstandings based on erroneous beliefs or miscalibrated perceptions can result in consumers theoretically acting rationally—that is, consistent with their expectations—but nevertheless behaving suboptimally.

This session integrates four papers examining these sorts of consumer misunderstandings in daily life. These advanced projects (involving highly-powered field, laboratory, and online experiments) span topics of broad interest to consumer behavior researchers—from prosocial behavior to advice to conversation to engagement during consumption. And yet, they are highly connected: Each talk reveals a tendency for consumers to miscalculate the complexities of their everyday interactions, from the surprising depth of one's own and others' emotional reactions to the surprising pleasures of stepping outside one's comfort zone. Together, they elucidate the need for better understanding how to enhance consumer welfare.

**Kumar and Epley** investigate the beliefs about and reality following prosocial acts. Participants in their experiments predict how recipients will respond to their prosociality and recipients report their actual experience. They find that, due to an egocentric bias, those performing an act of kindness consistently underestimate how positive their recipients will feel. Consumers not recognizing the impact of their prosociality on others can stand in the way of themselves and others being better off.

**Sezer et al.** explore what they call the "I Told You So Effect" in the domain of advice. Hearing someone say "I told you so" after a misstep has been made can hurt relationships, decrease the likelihood of following subsequent advice, and thereby serve as a barrier to effective learning. Nonetheless, people often mistakenly choose to use this common phrase when giving advice.

**Kardas, Schroeder, and O'Brien** study mispredictions about the hedonic trajectory of conversation. Participants in these studies report believing that conversations with another person will become

less enjoyable over time, but actually experience more positive outcomes as discussions continue. As a result, people may under-exploit very effective opportunities to enrich themselves through interactions with others.

**Goor, Donnelly, and Norton** examine how unfamiliarity can lead to feelings of self-discovery. Specifically, they demonstrate that although consumers tend to like familiar products and experiences, unfamiliar products and experiences can foster greater consumer engagement. Engagement with the unfamiliar promotes a clearer understanding of who one really is. Importantly, they document evidence for a particular zone of proximal discovery: Moderately unfamiliar consumption experiences are most likely to facilitate self-discovery.

Notably, this work showcases several topics consistent with the theme of this year's conference, including gift-giving, identity, and interpersonal communication. In the City of Light, we hope to shine a light on some mistaken beliefs that appear to exist in consumers' minds. Our field is uniquely suited to understanding causes and consequences that can suggest steps consumers might take in order to make themselves better off. A better understanding of these misperceptions, we believe, can suggest ways for consumers to improve the quality of their day-to-day lives.

## **A Little Good Goes an Unexpectedly Long Way: Underestimating the Positive Impact of Kindness on Recipients**

### EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Positive interpersonal contact promotes well-being (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010). For example, consumers who spend money on others are happier than those who spend on themselves (Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008). Prosociality, then, can improve consumer welfare. Consumers have many opportunities to act prosocially but may not engage in prosocial behavior as often in everyday life as might be optimal. It is sometimes said that "a little good goes a long way." We find that it goes an *unexpectedly* long way: Performers of acts of kindness systematically underestimate the positive impact they have on recipients. These miscalibrated expectations matter because they create a barrier to prosocial engagement (Kumar & Epley, 2018). Decisions are guided partly by the expected value of action; the expected impact of a prosocial act on others may therefore guide one's behavior.

We first tested, on a broad range of participants, whether recipients of a prosocial act feel more positive than performers of the act anticipate. In **Experiment 1a**, MBA students ( $N = 106$ ) in a field experiment performed a variety of self-chosen acts of kindness and predicted how their recipients would react. Participants engaged in many different acts, including purchasing coffee, buying flowers, and delivering baked goods to others. We compared performer expectations to recipients' actual experience. Performers reported that their act was not as "big" as recipients perceived it to be, and reported expending less time, money, and energy than recipients believed performers had expended ( $ps < .001$ ). Performers also expected recipients to feel positive, but recipients reported feeling even more positive than performers anticipated ( $p < .001$ ). Consistent with prior research, performing a prosocial act was a significantly positive experience for performers as well, in this and all experiments ( $ps <$

.001). Performers additionally indicated that they perform prosocial acts less often than they'd like ( $p < .001$ ).

**Experiment 1b** replicated these findings holding the act itself relatively constant. The standardized prosocial behavior was sending a card to someone "just because." One hundred undergraduates did this and predicted how recipients would feel. We followed-up with recipients and measured how they actually felt. Performers again reported that their act was not as "big" as recipients perceived it to be, and also reported expending less time and energy than recipients believed performers had expended ( $ps < .001$ ). They also significantly underestimated how positive recipients would feel ( $p < .05$ ).

**Experiments 2a and 2b** provided tests of our hypotheses in designs enabling perfect response rates from recipients, something we could not obtain in the field settings of Experiments 1a-1b. We achieved this by having participants perform a prosocial act for a stranger nearby. Experiment 2a involved members of the public ( $N = 84$ ) who were visiting an attraction in a large urban field setting. Participants at a park gave hot chocolate to another person near an ice-skating rink. Givers again reported that their act was not as "big" as recipients perceived it to be, and significantly underestimated how positive it made recipients feel ( $ps < .001$ ). Experiment 2b ( $N = 102$ ) replicated these effects in a controlled laboratory setting, with participants giving away gifts from a "lab store" as the act of kindness ( $ps$  again  $< .001$ ).

We hypothesized that people undervalue the impact of prosociality due to a perspective-based asymmetry in attention paid to competence versus warmth in evaluating interpersonal behavior (Wojciszke, 1994). People focus more on competence when evaluating their own behavior but more on warmth when evaluating others' behavior. This could cause givers to focus inordinately on the details of the act itself: what one is giving and its objective value. Recipients of an act of kindness, however, care about what is given but also the positive intention and warmth that the act signifies. **Experiment 3** tested this explanation by comparing an act of kindness condition to a control condition in which participants received the same objective item but without it resulting from a prosocial act. Forty-nine participants gave a cupcake to 49 strangers in a park and predicted their reactions, while another 50 participants predicted the actual responses of 50 participants who received a cupcake from an experimenter (not as an act of kindness). Recipients reported a more positive and valuable experience in the kindness condition than in the control condition ( $p_{\text{big}} < .001$ ;  $p_{\text{mood}} = .06$ ), but those predicting their responses anticipated similar experiences for recipients in these two conditions ( $ps > .1$ ). A recipient's reaction to a prosocial act comes from the objective value of the act itself, plus the warmth conveyed by it. Here, performers may have attended to how much someone would like a cupcake, but not to the fact the cupcake was also a gift given in kindness.

**Experiment 4** ( $N = 200$ ) examined whether underestimating a recipient's emotional reaction also leads to underestimating their behavioral reaction. Kindness can spread through indirect reciprocity (Gray, Ward, & Norton, 2014). Those who receive kindness are more likely to behave kindly to others in the future. If people undervalue the positive impact of prosociality on others, they should also underestimate the magnitude of indirect reciprocity it produces in others. Participants completed a laboratory version of Experiment 3 (using gifts from Experiment 2b), and recipients were later assigned the role of "decider" in a dictator game (Camerer, 2003). Performers of the act predicted their recipient's behavior. They again underestimated the positive impact their prosocial act had on the recipient, both on the recipient's emotional experience and on their increased kindness towards a third party ( $ps < .05$ ).

Whereas those who perform an act of kindness might construe their act as relatively "little," as if they are not doing much at all, recipients construe it to be significantly "bigger" and of greater value than performers expect. Misunderstanding how recipients will respond may leave people choosing to engage in prosociality less often than they want to, thereby representing a barrier to prosocial interactions. Undervaluing the positive impact of a prosocial action can therefore keep people from being prosocial *enough* for both their own and others' well-being.

## The I Told You So Effect

### EXTENDED ABSTRACT

From solving complex problems to making purchases, people often rely on advice from others. In fact, consumers rarely make critical decisions in isolation. Prior research has identified multiple factors that influence individuals' use of advice. For instance, decision-makers weigh advice more heavily when the advice is costly to get (Patt, Bowles, & Cash, 2006), or when the task is difficult (Gino & Moore, 2007). When people feel confident or experience anger (Bonaccio & Dalal, 2006; Gino & Schweitzer, 2008), they are less likely to rely on advice. Similarly, advisor characteristics also impact whether people follow their advice. When the advisors are more experienced (Feng & MacGeorge, 2006; Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; Harvey & Fischer, 1997; Sniezek, Schrah, & Dalal, 2004; Soll & Larrick, 2009; Yaniv, 2004; Yaniv & Milyavsky, 2007) and have greater confidence (Phillips, 1999; Sniezek & Buckley, 1995; Sniezek & Van Swol, 2001; Soll & Larrick, 2009; Van Swol & Sniezek, 2005; Yaniv & Foster, 1997), the advice is weighted more heavily.

At the same time, however, the consequences of expressions that advisors use depend on the psychological and emotional reaction of the targets, and critically on their appraisal of the advisor statements as helpful or not, because interpersonal aspects in advice exchange are as important as the quality of the advice (Blunden, Logg, Brooks, John, & Gino, 2019). While previous research has focused on expressions that prompt advisor credibility and confidence (Soll & Larrick, 2009), little is known about the effects of statements that backfire. In the current research, we investigate a common and a universal statement that is of critical importance in advice-giving contexts: "I told you so."

Building on past research on advice-giving and learning, we conceptualize "I told you so" as a statement that stems from the satisfaction of being right. We propose that individuals who hear this statement view the advice giver as more condescending, less empathic, and less trustworthy. We suggest that although it is a very common statement that exists in all languages across the world, and is a universal phenomenon, saying I told you so backfires as it harms trust in advice exchange and hurts learning.

In **Study 1** ( $N = 302$ ), participants estimated an individual's weight from a photograph for three rounds. Out of 302 participants, 133 of them ignored their advisor's estimate in Round 1, and 169 of them took the advice. In Round 2, those who didn't follow the advice in Round 1, got another piece of advice, but half of them heard the new advice with "I told you so" while the other half only heard just the advice. Among the ones who ignored their partner's advice in the first round, those who received Round 2 advice with "I told you so" perceived the advice to be lower quality than those who received the same advice without the I told you so statement,  $t(131) = 2.64, p = .009, M = 4.11$  vs  $M = 4.75$ . Similarly, the group that received "I told you so" perceived their advisor to be more condescending,  $t(131) = 7.69, p < .001, M = 4.89$  vs  $M = 2.53$ , and less empathic  $t(131) = 3.43, p = .0008, M = 3.54$  vs  $M = 4.24$ .

In **Study 2** ( $N=500$ ), we employed the same design as Study 1, and randomly assigned participants to one of two between-participants conditions: “I told you so” vs “You were wrong.” When participants didn’t follow their partners’ advice, in Round 2, they either received “I told you so” or “You were wrong” as a message in addition to advice for the new round. Out of 500 participants, 276 of them ignored the advice from their partner in Round 1. Among the group who ignored their partner’s advice, those who received “I told you so” perceived their partners to be more condescending ( $t(274) = 8.07, p < .001, M = 5.01$  vs  $M = 3.71$ ), and less empathic ( $t(274) = 4.32, p = .002, M = 1.81$  vs  $M = 2.37$ ), than those who received “You were wrong” from their partners.

In **Study 3** ( $N=102$ ), participants in the lab completed the same weight estimation task, and those who received “I told you so” in Round 2, along with the advice, perceived their partner to be more condescending,  $t(100) = 9.67, p < .001, M = 5.03$  vs  $M = 2.87$ , less empathic  $t(100) = 7.23, p < .001, M = 1.81$  vs  $M = 3.56$ , and less trustworthy  $t(100) = 3.89, p = .004, M = 3.56$  vs  $M = 4.35$  than the participants who didn’t hear I told you so but received the same advice. More importantly, those who received “I told you so” were less likely to choose the same partner for the subsequent round,  $p = .03$ .

In **Study 4** ( $N=200$ ), participants engaged in 10 rounds of the same task, but as an advisor this time. After each round, they found out they were right, and their partner was wrong, and they could either send “Bummer!” or “Bummer, I told you so!” as a message. 142 out of 200 participants (71%) chose to send the “I told you so” message at least once across 10 rounds, and on average, participants chose to send this message 3.235 times of the possible 10. About 23% of participants chose to say I told you so after only Round 1. In other words, despite not liking this statement (as found in Studies 1, 2, and 3), when given a chance, participants use the opportunity to say “I told you so.”

We contribute to the advice literature by focusing on interpersonal effects, as opposed to decision accuracy and quality, which has been the primary focus of previous research (Bonaccio & Dalal, 2006). We introduce and examine the psychology underlying a common advice statement “I told you so” and shed light on the importance of empathy and trust in learning and building an advisor-advisee relationship.

### Keep Talking: (Mis)Understanding the Hedonic Trajectory of Conversation

#### EXTENDED ABSTRACT

People engage in conversation every day, from small-talking with colleagues to checking in with close others. We explore one common but consequential conversation opportunity: talking with new acquaintances. People encounter far more opportunities to interact with new acquaintances than they take (Hill & Dunbar, 2003), yet doing so forms the basis of richer relationships. Typically, the more people talk, the more they learn, the closer they feel, and the more they like each other (Aron et al., 1997; Quidbach et al., 2019; Reis, 2012). Only by continuing the conversation do two strangers have a chance of becoming two friends.

Why might people forego such opportunities? On the one hand, people cannot always tell whether others are willing to engage at all. Thus, people often fail to initially approach others to start any conversation (Boothby et al., 2018; Dunn et al., 2007; Epley & Schroeder, 2014). We build on this idea by examining another barrier that may rise *after* people have officially met and enjoyed some initial conversation. Specifically, even after enjoying the start of a conversation, people may believe the experience will quickly grow dull as

they and their partner must *maintain* a conversation—despite the aforementioned research suggesting the opposite.

Two other literatures support this possibility. First, predictions about future experiences reflect one’s mental simulations of those experiences, but mental simulations are “mere cardboard cutouts of reality” (Gilbert & Wilson, 2007, p. 1354). As a result, after people initially experience an enjoyable stimulus, they tend to underappreciate the extent to which repeat exposures can reveal exciting new information (O’Brien, 2019). People notoriously misunderstand how experiences build and grow over time. Second, people are especially prone to misunderstand the depth and complexity of *other people*, given the inaccessibility of others’ elaborate mental lives from an observer perspective (Waytz et al., 2013). For example, people tend to underestimate others’ capacities to generate nuanced opinions and experience intense emotions (Pronin, 2008).

Put succinctly, these literatures suggest people may underappreciate the extent to which they and a new acquaintance will continue to find new things to discuss beyond their initial interaction, leading people to underappreciate their enjoyment as they continue conversing—even if they enjoyed chatting initially.

In **Experiment 1**, pairs of strangers ( $N = 100$  pairs) conversed for one round (3 minutes). Some pairs then predicted their trajectory of enjoyment over four additional rounds. Others actually continued conversing and reported their enjoyment round-by-round. We observed the hypothesized Role  $\times$  Round interaction ( $p < .001$ ): Whereas *Predictors* expected enjoyment to decline over time ( $p < .001$ ), *Experiencers* reported that enjoyment actually increased ( $p = .010$ ).

**Experiment 2** utilized a within-participant design, with the same participants first making predictions and then reporting their experiences. We also tested mechanism: Whether people misunderstand the hedonic trajectory of conversation because they underestimate how much their pair will have to discuss. Pairs of strangers ( $N = 50$  pairs) completed a similar experiment to Experiment 1. We also measured conversation material (“How much will you [did you] have to discuss during this round?”). For enjoyment, we again observed the hypothesized Phase  $\times$  Round interaction ( $p = .017$ ): Participants predicted that enjoyment would decline ( $p < .001$ ), yet those same participants then experienced similarly high enjoyment ( $p = .920$ ). This interaction also emerged for conversation material ( $p < .001$ ): Participants predicted that conversation material would diminish ( $p < .001$ ), yet then maintained ample material ( $p = .797$ ). The effect of Phase on changes in enjoyment, via changes in conversation material, was significant ( $b = -0.38, 95\% \text{ CI} = [-0.80, -0.15]$ ).

If people underestimate enjoyment because they underestimate their pair’s ability to sustain material, they might underestimate enjoyment more when having one long conversation with the same person (deepening one relationship) versus having multiple shorter conversations with different people (broadening their network). **Experiment 3** tested this possibility ( $N = 395$  individuals). Procedures were identical to Experiment 2, except participants were randomly assigned to either have five rounds of conversation with the same partner, or five rounds of conversation each with new partners. Again, there were significant Phase  $\times$  Round interactions for enjoyment and conversation material ( $ps < .001$ ), with participants generally underestimating both. Most interesting, we observed split evidence for Partner effects. There was *no* 3-way interaction for enjoyment ( $p = .584$ ): All participants (regardless of partner) predicted declining enjoyment ( $ps < .001$ ) yet then experienced increasing enjoyment ( $ps < .019$ ). However, there *was* a 3-way interaction for conversation material: Same-partner participants were *especially* likely to underestimate conversation material as compared to different-partner

participants ( $p < .001$ ). Conversation material again served as the mediator ( $b = -0.44$ , 95% CI = [-0.61, -0.28]).

These experiments reveal that people misunderstand the hedonic trajectory of conversation. Even after enjoying some initial conversation, people imagined that further conversation would quickly grow dull—yet experienced similar or greater enjoyment in reality.

Our findings advance research on social forecasting errors. Conversation provides feedback about others and thus should calibrate expectations. However, our paradigm compares predictions to experiences *after* one round of conversation and finds that people still underestimate enjoyment under these conservative conditions. Social forecasting errors may arise not only from lack of knowledge about one's initial approach but also from misunderstanding how the experience will change as they *keep* talking.

Additionally, our participants underestimated enjoyment because they underestimated their pair's ability to sustain material, but also underestimated enjoyment before speaking with multiple partners, when material should be ample. Perhaps people are also (mistakenly) worried about how fatiguing social interaction is (Zelenski et al., 2013). Future research should further unpack whether people are concerned that they themselves (versus their partner) will struggle to generate material. Finally, future research should examine downstream effects. People may exit conversations earlier than they should for their own happiness, just as our participants underappreciated how much further conversation would measure up to initial conversation. Accordingly, people may keep to themselves or pursue impoverished interactions through social media (Kross et al., 2013), while returning to those we already know may prove more rewarding.

### The Road Not Taken: Consumption of Unfamiliar Products Increases Feelings of Self-Discovery and Product Engagement

#### EXTENDED ABSTRACT

As consumers, our identity and roles in life are intertwined with our possessions and consumption behaviors (Belk, 1988). The types of products we purchase are influenced by our personality and values (Donnelly, Iyer, & Howell, 2012; Matz, Gladstone, & Stillwell, 2016) and consumers often turn to durable goods like clothing and accessories to construct and convey an actual, nostalgic, or aspirational self to others (Chernev, Hamilton, & Gal, 2011; Goor, Ordayeva, Keinan, & Crener, 2019). This research examines a different perspective of consumption experience and argues that products not only facilitate self-expression, but can also help consumers discover who they are. Specifically, we demonstrate that unfamiliar (vs. familiar) consumption experiences may increase the sense of self-discovery, and thus lead to greater engagement with the unfamiliar product.

Prior research demonstrates that consumers seek extraordinary experiences to signal status (Keinan & Kivetz, 2010) or to feel intensely alive (Arnould & Price, 1993). Furthermore, major life events, like starting a new job or starting a new relationship, can encourage consumers to question previous values and ideas and bring about new roles in life (Schouten, 1991). Conversely, repeated consumption can increase satiation and adaptation, and reduce consumer enjoyment and product evaluation (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014; Frederick & Loewenstein, 1999; Gershon & Smith, 2019). Contributing to this literature, we find that basic albeit unfamiliar consumption experiences, such as listening to an unfamiliar song, eating unfamiliar food, or using an unfamiliar product, provide consumers opportunities to discover more about themselves (as opposed

to merely discovering more about an unfamiliar product), which in turn, increases engagement.

Three studies demonstrate our effect and suggest a zone of proximal discovery – moderate rather than extreme levels of unfamiliarity facilitate the process of self-discovery. Consistent with theories in developmental psychology (Vygotsky, 1978), which suggest that children have a successful and positive experience when learning skills that can be directly applied to previously developed knowledge, we demonstrate that some level of familiarity is needed to increase consumers' self-discovery and further interest in the product.

In **Study 1** ( $N=176$ , MTurk), participants described a recent purchase of a product that was unfamiliar to them (vs. a new product that replaced an existing one) and indicated the extent to which the product made them discover and learn about themselves using a 3-item index (“Using this product I discovered new parts within myself,” “Purchasing this product felt like a discovery,” “This product helped me to learn about myself”;  $\alpha=.82$ ). In both conditions, participants wrote about similar purchase categories (clothing, cleaning supplies, yard tools, and electronics). Importantly, as expected, unfamiliar products increased self-discovery ( $M_{\text{unfamiliar}}=4.23$ ,  $SD=1.47$ ) compared to new products ( $M_{\text{new}}=3.76$ ,  $SD=1.61$ ;  $F(1,174)=3.94$ ,  $p=.049$ ).

In **Study 2** ( $N=274$ ), undergraduates were randomly assigned to drink a small sample of Watermelon (unfamiliar flavor) vs. Orange (familiar flavor) juice. A pre-test ( $N=100$ ) confirmed that Watermelon is a less familiar juice flavor than orange ( $p<.001$ ). After tasting the juice, participants indicated how interested and engaged they were by the juice using a 6-item scale (e.g., “I feel engaged in the experience of drinking,” “I stopped several times to examine the juice and how it's served,” “I'd be curious to try it again in the future”;  $\alpha=.79$ ). They also indicated how much they like the juice in general (one-item), and the extent to which drinking the juice made them discover and learn about themselves using a 6-item scale (e.g., the juice “elicited some self-reflection,” “opened me to new experiences and a new aspect within me,” “made me reevaluate my preferences,” and “felt like a part of a journey of self-discovery”;  $\alpha=.85$ ). The results revealed that the unfamiliar juice increased interest and engagement ( $M_{\text{unfamiliar}}=3.62$ ,  $SD=1.28$ ) compared to the familiar flavor ( $M_{\text{familiar}}=3.05$ ,  $SD=1.21$ ;  $F(1,272)=14.70$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and this effect was mediated by feelings of self-discovery ( $a \times b=.3287$ ,  $SE=.0953$ , 95% CI=[.1452,.5202]). Interestingly, the unfamiliar experience decreased liking ( $M_{\text{unfamiliar}}=3.75$ ,  $SD=1.82$ ) compared to the familiar juice ( $M_{\text{familiar}}=4.49$ ,  $SD=1.59$ ;  $F(1,272)=12.66$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

**Study 3** tested an important boundary condition: the potential zone of proximal discovery. Participants ( $N=303$ , MTurk) ranked their familiarity with five music genres: country, rock, rap, jazz, and classical. They were then randomly assigned to one of three conditions: listening to a song from a familiar genre (ranked 1/5), slightly unfamiliar genre (ranked 3/5), or a very unfamiliar genre (ranked 5/5). After listening to a brief 60-second music clip, participants indicated the extent to which listening to the music helped them discover and learn about themselves using a 5-item scale (e.g., “felt like a part of a journey of self-discovery,” “made me reevaluate my music preferences,” and “advanced my self-knowledge”;  $\alpha=.86$ ). They also evaluated how much listening to the song helped them learn about music using 3-item scale (listening to that song “is like taking a music lesson,” “made me feel like I know more about music,” “made me realize that music has subtle nuances”;  $\alpha=.87$ ). The results indicated that the slightly unfamiliar genre increased feelings of self-discovery ( $M_{3/5}=3.13$ ,  $SD=1.49$ ) compared to the familiar genre ( $M_{1/5}=2.71$ ,  $SD=1.34$ ;  $p=.047$ ). The effect of listening to a very unfamiliar genre was non-significant compared to the other conditions

( $M_{s/5}=2.93$ ,  $SD=1.63$ ,  $p's>.300$ ). Importantly, the effect of genre familiarity on music-discovery was not significant across conditions ( $p's>.488$ ).

Our work contributes to the literature on consumer psychology, suggesting that consumers might be more engaged using unfamiliar (vs. familiar) products in order to learn about themselves through interacting with the products. Preliminary results further suggest that older consumers are more susceptible to self-discovery using unfamiliar products. Our research has also important practical implications. Today, marketers often use big-data analyses to provide consumers recommendations that are based on product familiarity and similarity (Linden, Smith, & York, 2003), even though consumers regularly express preferences for a greater variety of products (Ratner and Kahn 2002; Simonson 1990) and unique experiences (Keinan & Kivetz, 2010). Our research demonstrates that marketers could increase engagement and interest in their products by giving consumers the opportunity to experience new products (e.g., new collections, samples, extensions) that encourage greater self-discovery.

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