

Research Dialogue

## Exploring the complexities of value creation: The role of engagement strength

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### Abstract

Regulatory engagement theory (Higgins, E. T. (2006). Value from hedonic experience and engagement. *Psychological Review*, 113, 439–460; Higgins, E.T. & Scholer, A.A. (2009). Engaging the consumer: The science and art of the value creation process. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*) proposes that engagement strength plays a critical role in the creation of value intensity. We discuss the ways in which engagement, in this model, can be distinguished from arousal, motivation to act, and experienced difficulty. We distinguish between the mechanisms and predictions made by regulatory engagement theory versus cognitive dissonance theory and a goal systems approach. We also describe the complexities and conditions under which some sources of engagement strength (e.g., regulatory fit) may relate to value creation. For instance, while regulatory fit has more typically been associated with increased engagement strength, regulatory nonfit may also sometimes increase engagement by serving as an obstacle to be overcome. We review existing evidence and highlight open questions related to the role of engagement strength in creating value.

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We argued in our target article (Higgins & Scholer, 2009) that to understand how much or how little people value something, it's necessary to consider not only the *outcomes* of goal pursuit (e.g., the quality of the chocolate in the chocolate lava cake, the molten nature of the cake center) but also the *process* of goal pursuit itself (e.g., the obstacles encountered in the process of obtaining the cake, the decision processes used to select the cake versus the crème brûlée). Specifically, we proposed that an individual's strength of engagement in goal pursuit plays a critical role in how intensely an individual will value the chocolate lava cake (or any other value target) (see also Higgins, 2006, 2009). Furthermore, and importantly, value *intensity* can be influenced by a number of sources of engagement strength that are independent of factors that determine value *direction*.

Our target article extended regulatory engagement theory as proposed by Higgins (2006). It presented new evidence for how a number of different sources of engagement strength contribute to value intensity. It also expanded the theory by differentiating more clearly between the effects of these sources of engagement

strength on the value intensity of the target versus the experiential quality of the goal pursuit activity itself. We begin our response to the commentaries by clarifying some key conceptual points about regulatory engagement theory. We then discuss some of the general themes that emerged across all four commentaries.

### Regulatory engagement theory: conceptual clarifications

Regulatory engagement theory distinguishes between two contributors to the value experience—the direction of motivational force (towards or away) and the intensity of the motivational force (strong or weak). For example, in trying to understand how much someone values the latest Woody Allen movie, regulatory engagement theory suggests that we need to consider not only whether that individual experiences attraction or repulsion towards the movie (direction), but also whether that attraction/repulsion is strong versus weak (intensity). Whether someone will feel attraction or repulsion towards the movie depends on a number of factors that have traditionally been associated with value—the movie's subjective pleasure/pain properties, the movie's ability to fulfill some need (e.g., after a drought of Woody Allen flicks), whether one is watching the

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movie with other Woody Allen aficionados, and whether the alternate film that could be viewed instead is the latest Disney versus Coen Brothers creation. The idea that such factors impact the *direction* of the value experience is not new. The idea that such factors can impact the *intensity* of the value experience is also not new.

What *is* new is the idea that the *intensity* of the motivational force can be affected not only by the hedonic properties of the target object (and other sources of value direction), but also by factors that are independent of the object or outcome of goal pursuit. These nondirectional factors (e.g. overcoming and opposing obstacles, experienced likelihood of outcome attainment, and the use of “fit” and “proper” means) can impact the value experience because they influence strength of engagement and thereby change the intensity of the value experience. That brings us to our first points of clarification. How is engagement defined within *this* model? And what, exactly, is the nature of the relationship between engagement, value, and action?

### Defining engagement

As Fishbach (2009) points out in her commentary, value experiences may play an instrumental role in motivating subsequent action (more about this later). She refers to this “motivation to act” as engagement. We want to be clear that this definition of engagement is not the one adopted by regulatory engagement theory. In regulatory engagement theory, engagement is defined as a state of being involved, occupied, fully absorbed, or engrossed in something. In this definition, engagement is not synonymous with a motivation to act or the likelihood of goal completion. The more engaged I am in the movie, the less likely I may be to pay attention to the skirmish in the row behind me or the more likely I may be to attend to the unfolding of the central plot points. Engagement, as defined in this model, is about *sustained attention*. As explicitly stated in regulatory engagement theory, engagement is simply an intensifier. Stronger engagement does not direct action by itself because, by itself, it is directionless. Furthermore, while stronger engagement contributes to stronger motivational force intensity, motivational force intensity is also, by itself, directionless. Motivational force intensity is about the intensity of “wanting.” Other factors give direction that makes the wanting either about wanting to make something happen or wanting to make something not happen. The intensity alone does not yield action. Direction, to which factors other than engagement strength contribute, is also necessary.

Although engagement is about sustained attention, Pham and Avnet (2009) suggested that behavioral withdrawal (looking away from the movie, for instance) may not always signal lower engagement. While we agree that the relation of engagement to specific behavioral actions is not direct, behaviorally turning attention away from something will generally result in lower engagement by definition. A person who turns away from the movie is in state of low engagement vis-à-vis the movie because their attention to the movie is not sustained. Behavioral withdrawal may occur because of initially great engagement (e.g., a gruesome scene), but the withdrawal itself would

generally result in lower engagement. Indeed, this is probably why the attention withdrawal often happens.

Studies examining actual or mental distancing (e.g., Kross, Ayduk, & Mischel, 2005) suggest that negative value can be attenuated by this kind of pulling away. However, because it is also possible to look away from the movie while continuing to focus intensely on the mental image that remains, we do recognize that behavioral withdrawal will not always lead to lower engagement. One of the challenges going forward will be to find additional behavioral and physiological markers of engagement that can help to clarify the nature of this sustained absorption. In addition, we are not suggesting that the attention withdrawal cannot be followed by engagement with some other target, such as hugging your partner for comfort. But the attention withdrawal itself is likely to weaken engagement with the movie.

We also believe that engagement is *not* synonymous with arousal (see also Higgins, 2006), though we agree with Pham and Avnet (2009) that more must be done to clearly delineate their differences. One of the primary reasons we believe that engagement cannot be equated with arousal is evidence that arousal may actually *decrease* with sustained attention (Parasuraman, 1984; Coull, 1998 for a review). Furthermore, there is some empirical work that suggests that arousal alone may not be able to account for predicted strength of engagement effects. In studies we conducted in collaboration with Janina Marguc (Higgins, Marguc, & Scholer, 2009), all participants were exposed to the same aversive background noise while working on an anagram task. In other words, all participants were exposed to the same arousing unpleasant stimulus. However, only participants who were presented with the noise as an “interference to oppose” (i.e., to be dealt with by increasing attention to the task) showed the predicted engagement effects (stronger task engagement increasing the attractiveness of the task reward). Participants who were presented with the same noise as a “nuisance to be coped with” (i.e., by turning attention away from the task) did not show these effects. That said, we certainly agree with Pham and Avnet that more direct tests of the differences between engagement and arousal are needed in the future.

### Value dynamics: engagement, value, and action

Although our definition of engagement differs from Fishbach (2009), we do agree with her suggestion that goals can motivate engagement and disengagement (as defined by regulatory engagement theory) and can influence the value assigned to objects. How can this be a model that allows both for “doing is for liking” and “liking is for doing?” It is important, first, to note that regulatory engagement theory is a model of the antecedents of the value experience. In this sense, the model highlights the ways in which “doing is for liking” because of the role, in particular, of goal pursuit processes in shaping engagement strength and value intensity. However, that does *not* mean that this value experience plays no further role in motivating action. Indeed, many of the empirical tests of regulatory engagement theory end with *action*, such as task performance, not just

evaluation (e.g., Bianco, Higgins, & Klem, 2003; Hong & Lee, 2008; Shah, Higgins, & Friedman, 1998).

Additionally, while the theory emphasizes the causal direction from engagement to value, the theory is not silent on the effect of hedonic evaluation on engagement. In the original formulation (Higgins, 2006), and in the current elaboration (Higgins & Scholer, 2009), people's subjective responses to the hedonic properties of an object or activity are explicitly included as an additional source of engagement strength. This means that there is a dynamic process whereby the evaluation of some object influences engagement, which then, along with other sources of engagement strength, intensifies or de-intensifies the value reaction to the object. From the perspective of regulatory engagement theory, both causal directions are important and need to be included in a full account of the reciprocal relation between value and engagement. The theory emphasizes the effect of engagement on value because this is the direction that, historically, has received the least attention in the literature.

Furthermore, regulatory engagement theory suggests some interesting ways in which individuals could exert control over value in the service of action. Fishbach (2009) suggests that “people may actively bolster or undermine the value of certain goal states in order to influence their motivation toward and away from these states. That is, evaluation can serve as a self-control function” (in this issue). Often this bolstering or undermining of value is done through hedonic channels—through increasing the pleasure or pain properties of some target (e.g., associating a target with positive or negative affective evaluations, Custers & Aarts, 2005). However, regulatory engagement theory makes clear that the hedonic (directional) channel may not be the only way in which people can bolster or undermine value in the service of effective self-regulation. Given that there are non-directional factors that affect value through their effects on value *intensity*, it's possible that people may enact control through these channels as well. For instance, when confronted with an unexpected obstacle, people could increase the anticipated pleasure of goal attainment to boost their motivation and not give up. But they could also *create* an obstacle as something to be opposed, such as increasing perceived task difficulty, in order to strengthen engagement and increase value itself. In sum, Fishbach (2009) raises an important question about the function of value that we believe can be explored in interesting ways within the framework of regulatory engagement theory.

The above example of increasing perceived task difficulty as a tactic to strengthen engagement raises another issue from the commentaries that we would like to briefly address. Förster (2009) suggested that difficulty is the driving factor for strength of engagement. Given that some sources of stronger engagement (e.g., use of fit or proper means, high likelihood) do not concern difficulty, we would not agree that difficulty is *the* driving factor for engagement strength. It is true that opposing interfering forces and overcoming personal resistance, as sources of engagement strength, can be related to the variable of difficulty. Even here, however, the relation between difficulty and opposition or overcoming is not straightforward. As is

discussed in more detail in Higgins (2006), difficulty can reach a point where people no longer oppose or overcome but instead quit—which weakens engagement. Thus, although we would argue that greater opposition or greater overcoming strengthens engagement, we would not argue that greater difficulty, by itself, strengthens engagement.

### *Regulatory engagement theory and cognitive dissonance*

The last conceptual clarification we want to address is in response to parallels that are sometimes drawn between regulatory engagement theory and cognitive dissonance theory (e.g., Fishbach, 2009; Pham & Avnet, 2009). While regulatory engagement theory can provide an alternative account for the findings of some paradigmatic dissonance studies, such as “effort justification” studies, engagement theory and dissonance theory do *not* always make the same predictions nor, when they do, are the underlying mechanisms posited to be the same. For instance, imagine that you decide to scour your bathtub in order to have a clean house (a positive outcome). This may induce dissonance because of the presence of two inconsistent thoughts: “This is unpleasant and hard” and “I freely chose to do it.” Cognitive dissonance theory proposes that you could reduce this dissonance by increasing the value of ending up with a clean house (adding consonant justifications). A different (additional) mechanism for the increase in value, proposed by regulatory engagement theory, is that overcoming your inherent resistance strengthens engagement, intensifying the positivity of a clean house.

Although the underlying mechanisms are different, in some cases, like the example above, both theories make the same prediction. But this is not always the case. For example, there are two classic predictions that dissonance theory makes that regulatory engagement theory does not: a) attitude change or value increase is more likely to occur under a condition of free choice than under forced choice; and b) in a choice between two positive alternatives, the forsaken option should decrease in value, while the chosen option increases in value, in order to justify the decision (i.e., the classic spreading effect). We recently conducted a study to tease apart these two differing predictions that dissonance versus engagement theory would make (Higgins et al., 2009, Study 3).

In the Higgins et al. (2009) study, participants had to choose between two anagram tasks (one with an interfering noise, one with no noise) associated with different attractive gifts under “free choice” or “forced choice” conditions. All participants ultimately worked on the same anagram task in the presence of an interfering noise that was presented as an “interference to oppose.” To the extent that participants perceived the background noise as a difficulty or challenge (i.e., something to be opposed), we predicted that the prize should increase in value. Whereas regulatory engagement theory predicts the value increase in both conditions, the presence of a dissonance mechanism should yield a stronger effect in the “free choice” than the “forced choice” condition (where the effect could even disappear because being “forced” to do the task is a consonant element). Second, after completing the anagram task, participants evaluated both gifts

(both the chosen and forsaken gift). If a dissonance mechanism were present (under “Free Choice”), then the chosen gift should increase in value but the forsaken gift should, if anything, decrease in value (again, the classic “spreading effect”). According to regulatory engagement theory, however, the positive value for *both* gifts should increase because strengthened engagement would intensify their attractiveness. In support of a regulatory engagement mechanism, participants evaluated *both* gifts more highly as perceived difficulty increased, and just as much in the “forced choice” condition as in the “free choice” condition.

We certainly are not suggesting that this engagement mechanism supplants or replaces a dissonance mechanism. Cognitive dissonance theory is about how inconsistency can result in justifications that produce value change. Regulatory engagement theory is about how overcoming resistance strengthens engagement that produces value change. Indeed, dissonance resolution from justification concerns a way of establishing what’s real, a mechanism for experiencing “truth,” that is totally independent of engagement strength as a motivational mechanism (see Higgins, 2009). This means that cognitive dissonance theory has regions of applicability where regulatory engagement theory is silent. We are simply claiming that the opposite is also true. Regulatory engagement theory has regions of applicability where cognitive dissonance theory is silent. When there is overlap of applicability, as in some “effort justification” studies, then regulatory engagement theory can provide an additional, perhaps complementary, account for the obtained findings. As Pham and Avnet (2009) point out, another critical approach for disambiguating the differences between regulatory engagement theory and cognitive dissonance theory will be to do more studies where the target object is negative—a situation, depending on the appropriate conditions, in which regulatory engagement theory would predict an intensification of negativity whereas cognitive dissonance theory would predict an attenuation.

### Regulatory fit, likelihood, and a new story of obstacles

Across the commentaries, one consistent theme revolved around the question of *when* different potential sources of engagement will actually increase versus decrease engagement. Although we emphasized the ways in which being in a state of regulatory fit increases engagement, Lee (2009) suggested that there may be times when regulatory *nonfit* will increase engagement. Although we argued in the target paper that high likelihood will often increase engagement because it makes future outcomes feel real, i.e., something one needs to prepare for, Fishbach (2009) suggested that low likelihood may also sometimes increase engagement. Specifically, both Lee and Fishbach suggest the interesting possibility that regulatory nonfit and low likelihood can be conceptualized as types of obstacles. Pham and Avnet (2009) asked a slightly different, though related question: how can we know a priori when individuals will resist an interfering force or try to oppose an obstacle? According to regulatory engagement theory, obstacles and challenges would only strengthen engagement when they

are opposed, so it is important to think about when and why individuals will oppose perceived obstacles.

These commentaries highlight that, especially regarding regulatory fit and likelihood as sources of engagement, there are really *two* stories to be told. Regarding regulatory fit, Lee (2009) suggests that whether regulatory fit or nonfit has a greater impact on creating value may depend on an individual’s pre-existing level of engagement. When individuals are not very engaged, regulatory fit may be more likely to affect value because of the enhanced fluency and ease of processing associated with regulatory fit (Hong & Lee, 2008; Wang & Lee, 2006). However, when individuals have high pre-existing engagement strength, then regulatory nonfit may actually result in ultimately greater engagement. Why would this be the case? In large part, it has to do with the question that Pham and Avnet (2009) raised. It may be that the people most likely to oppose obstacles are the ones who are already somewhat involved. Thus, for these individuals, non-fit may function like an obstacle—a problem that needs attention—strengthening engagement. In contrast, individuals who have initially low involvement may not be motivated enough to oppose the obstacle. For these individuals, regulatory fit, rather than nonfit, may be more likely to result in increased engagement.

This same logic can be applied to understanding when high versus low likelihoods will lead to more or less engagement. When there is high engagement to begin with, then low likelihoods, now functioning as perceived difficulty, may create obstacles individuals oppose, further strengthening engagement. However, when there is low engagement initially, high likelihoods may establish the future reality that increases engagement because of the need to be prepared.

One intriguing note to consider, however, is how the likelihood is presented. Fishbach and Zhang (2008; reported in Fishbach, 2009) found that those who believed that their likelihood of developing cholesterol was high were more likely to value activities that could promote good health. But does it matter whether people are told about the high likelihood of developing cholesterol versus the low likelihood of staying healthy? From the perspective of “high likelihood strengthens engagement because it makes future outcomes feel real,” people told that they have a high likelihood of developing cholesterol would be more engaged than people told that they have a low likelihood of staying healthy. From the perspective of “low likelihood strengthens engagement because it acts as an obstacle,” either framing might be effective in strengthening engagement.

Lee (2009) and Fishbach (2009) have raised an important and interesting issue about the story of obstacles. They suggest that the *pre-existing level of engagement*, perhaps as embodied in pre-existing motivational force intensity, may be an important factor in whether regulatory fit or nonfit, high or low likelihood, will have a greater effect on value creation. We believe that this is an intriguing suggestion and one worthy of further exploration. That said, we don’t want to claim that this solves the puzzle that Pham and Avnet (2009) raised. This doesn’t tell us how *much* pre-existing engagement is enough or how to assess that a priori across contexts. However, Förster’s (2009)

integration of regulatory engagement theory with other dynamic goal theories suggests the possibility that the dynamics of goal systems may provide some insight into predicting, a priori, levels of pre-existing engagement (e.g., the difference between unfulfilled versus completed goals; the mechanisms of goal shielding). Thus, we believe that these proposals suggest some ways to begin to address this issue.

We should emphasize, however, that the regulatory fit part of the story may be more complicated due to the multiple channels through which it could affect value. Although we touched upon this in the target article, we want to say a bit more here, particularly in response to the ideas developed by Pham and Avnet (2009) about how two of the channels through which regulatory fit could work might operate depending on individuals' "pre-existing level of involvement." Pham and Avnet (2009) differentiate between regulatory fit effects that appear to operate through a "feeling right as feeling good" feelings-as-information mechanism (Pham, 2004; Schwarz & Clore, 2007) versus an engagement mechanism.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, Pham and Avnet (2009) suggest that when individuals have a high pre-existing level of involvement, regulatory fit will be more likely to operate through an engagement mechanism. However, they suggest that when individuals have a low pre-existing level of involvement, regulatory fit may be more likely to operate through the "feeling right as feeling good" mechanism.

If we combine their proposal with that made by Lee (2009), it suggests that people's pre-existing level of involvement could impact both whether regulatory nonfit would be experienced as an obstacle to be overcome (more likely when level of involvement is higher) and the channel through which regulatory fit might operate (the engagement mechanism more likely than the "feeling right as feeling good" mechanism). Thus, pre-existing high involvement and non-fit would operate through the engagement mechanism, which for the case of message persuasion, would intensify negative reactions to low quality arguments and intensify positive reactions to high quality arguments—an enhanced "strength of argument" effect on persuasion.

As has been discussed elsewhere, there appear to be multiple ways in which regulatory fit has its effects (see Cesario, Higgins, & Scholer, 2008; Lee & Higgins, 2009). While there is clear evidence that regulatory fit operates at least sometimes by strengthening engagement, that does not preclude the possibility that regulatory fit affects value creation through other channels as well. And it appears that variables such as whether regulatory fit is created prior to exposure to a value target, or whether it is created by a property that is part of the value target itself, are also important to consider. Bottom line: There is still a lot to be learned about the underlying mechanisms.

<sup>1</sup> Pham and Avnet (2009) discuss "feeling right" as a "feeling right as feeling good" affect-as-information mechanism. However, "feeling right" can also refer to feeling right about one's reaction (positive or negative) to a situation or target (cf. Cesario, Grant, & Higgins, 2004). In situations where one's reaction to a situation/target is negative, these two mechanisms make different predictions, as discussed by Cesario et al. (2004), Cesario, Higgins, and Scholer (2008), and Lee and Higgins (2009).

## Regulatory engagement theory and multifinality

Förster (2009) asked to what extent might regulatory engagement effects be accounted for by a goal-systems approach to thinking about multifinality (cf. Kruglanski, Shah, Friedman, Chun, & Sleeth-Keppler, 2002). "One may argue that a process goal, such as 'doing things the proper way' is a goal in itself; in this way, any situation of fit can be reduced to a situation in which two goals are active at the same time, increasing value" (Förster, 2009, in this issue). We should note that the notion of multifinality providing an alternative explanation to regulatory engagement theory is probably most relevant for the "use of proper means" and "regulatory fit" sources of engagement. It's less clear how multifinality could provide an alternative explanation for strength of engagement effects arising from high likelihood, for instance. In this section, we discuss the similarities and differences between a multifinality account of goal creation and a regulatory engagement theory account of goal creation. To do this, we return to the scene of Förster's (2009) three-star restaurant.

Let's take the case of someone trying to decide between two three-star restaurants: one that is known for also being environmentally-minded, i.e., "green", while the other is simply known for its three stars. To make it more fun, let's imagine our decider uses proper means in making this decision and decides to go to the "green" restaurant. From a goal systems, multi-finality perspective, deciding to go to this restaurant serves two focal goals—the goal to eat fine food and the goal to "be green," and perhaps even a third, background goal with respect to doing things in the proper way. From a goal systems perspective, the choice—the restaurant—is more highly valued because it serves multiple goals. Using proper means adds value to the restaurant in much the same way as choosing it because of its environmental attitude. Thus, a multifinality perspective could account for the increased value of the restaurant. But, importantly, though the *restaurant* may be valued more, the multifinality perspective is silent about how the decision to go to the restaurant will affect *your actual experience of the food* at dinner.

From a regulatory engagement theory perspective, the greater engagement from using proper means would intensify the actual value experience of the dining activity itself. If the restaurant lived up to its reputation, this would mean intensified attraction to food that was liked. But if the chef was having an off night, this could mean intensified *repulsion* to food that was disliked. These predictions are not made by a goal systems, multi-finality model. We believe that both goal systems theory and regulatory engagement theory make contributions to understanding value creation, but the mechanisms and predictions made by the two theories are not always the same. Critically, attaining multiple goals from a choice, like choosing to eat at the restaurant, will make the choice itself more positive. But regulatory engagement theory is also concerned with the value experience of the target of the goal pursuit, i.e., eating in this case, and its value could become more positive or *more negative* from stronger engagement depending on the valence direction of the target response. Together, a customer could end up saying, "It was definitely

the right choice to come here to eat, but, unfortunately, the food was pretty terrible.”

### The engagement experience

Most of the commentaries focused on the effects of engagement on the value of the target. This makes sense, as this was the primary focus of the theory's debut (Higgins, 2006), and has been the primary focus of the empirical work that's been done. However, in the target article, we suggested that to really understand the “art and science” of value creation, it's important to consider the effects of these different sources of engagement strength not only on the target, but also on the *experience of the goal pursuit activity itself*. We want to end our discussion here with some thoughts about the engagement experience that were highlighted, particularly, in the Pham and Avnet (2009) and Förster (2009) commentaries.

Pham and Avnet (2009) agree that value *intensity* is an important part of the value experience. However, they suggest that at least sometimes, value intensification effects may reflect the operation of a “feelings-of-engagement-as-information” process (as does Förster, 2009). Specifically, Pham and Avnet (2009) suggest that the question “how strongly do I feel about it?” in Pham's (2008) general-affect-as-information model (GAIM) may capture an *inferential process* by which people use the intensity of their reactions to determine value. To what extent does regulatory engagement theory suggest that engagement operates through a direct intensification (experience) mechanism versus an inferential mechanism?

While we believe that there may be times at which the inferential process operates, we think that engagement often affects value intensity *directly*. In studies of persuasion or evaluation, it's harder to distinguish between the operation of the two potential mechanisms. However, in studies in which the dependent measure has been performance, an experience mechanism can more easily account for the effects than an inferential mechanism. For example, regulatory fit effects have been found on better memory for the central events in a documentary film (Bianco et al., 2003) and on squeezing a handgrip longer (Hong & Lee, 2008). Additionally, regulatory engagement theory was developed on the basis of evidence from both human *and* non-human animals. A direct experience mechanism can be applied to both groups, whereas an inferential mechanism cannot be as easily applied to non-human animals.

We want to end with a statement about why we believe it matters to separate direction and intensity, even if the value is typically experienced holistically. If the value experience derived its intensity solely from properties of the target object/goal object itself (e.g., the concentration of fragrance in a perfume), such separation may not be essential. However, because value intensity can be affected by sources unrelated to the properties of the target object (e.g., a decision process involved in purchasing the perfume that creates regulatory fit; obstacles encountered in the process), such separation has significant implications for understanding value creation. Indeed, such sources can involve affective experiences that are opposite to their effect on the value of the final object (e.g.,

hating the obstacle but loving the target). Thus, to understand the ultimate effects of a particular factor, it is necessary to consider *both* how the source affects engagement strength (intensifying or deintensifying reaction to the value target) and how the source affects the experience of goal pursuit (e.g., making the goal pursuit activity itself more or less pleasant), recognizing that these two separate effects can go in opposite value directions.

### Concluding thoughts

It is our hope that regulatory engagement theory stimulates thinking about the value creation process, highlighting in particular how factors related to the process of goal pursuit itself can affect value intensity. Certainly, our own thinking was stimulated by the thoughtful and insightful commentaries in response to our target article. We thank all of the commentators for the opportunity for this rich discussion.

We conclude with two caveats and a hope. Although we believe that regulatory engagement theory proposes a useful framework for thinking about value, clearly it is not the whole story. Some significant and interesting questions about how value is created, maintained, and relates to action fall outside the scope of the theory (cf. Fishbach, 2009). Clearly, too, the theory itself is still being developed. With that in mind, we believe that there are exciting chapters ahead in this unfolding story and look forward to further discussions and input from others that can guide the exploration.

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