Treasured possessions and their relationship with self-identity development in adolescents

Vanda Midoly Yamaguchi

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project

Part of the Psychology Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/1553

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.
TREASURED POSSESSIONS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH
SELF-IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN ADOLESCENTS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Psychology

by
Vanda Midoly Yamaguchi
December 1997
TREASURED POSSESSIONS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH
SELF-IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN ADOLESCENTS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

by

Vanda Midoly Yamaguchi
December 1997
Approved by:

N. Laura Kamptner, Ph.D., Chair

Stacy Nagel, Ph.D.

Eugene Wong, Ph.D.
ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this exploratory study was to provide empirical support for the claim of current theories that treasured personal belongings reflect the self. Subjects were 76 female college students between the ages of 18 to 24 years who completed a questionnaire assessing self-identity, possessions, clothing, and living space. Results showed support for the notion that self-perception influences both the type of object treasured as well as meanings attributed to them. Comparisons between the "high" vs. "low" identity group's scores on the identity scale showed that individuals with a more defined sense of self were more likely to project their "self" into personal possessions and living space, but not clothing. Among participants, clothing was the most frequent named possession as best expressing who one is, and was also considered one of the main vehicles to expressing one's self. Participants' bedrooms were found to provide individuals with a sense of autonomy, security, creativity, accomplishment, and privacy. Contrary to expectations, objects identified most frequently as best expressing who one is were found to have more symbolic rather than instrumental (control-related) meanings. In conclusion, overall findings provided tentative support for claims that treasured possessions reflect one's self.
Many thanks to Dr. Laura Kamptner for her guidance during the entire process of this study, for her patience in dealing with my inexperience, for her assistance in my hopeless moments, and for her words of encouragement during the difficult times. In addition, I would like to thank my family for their help and support. Especially my sister Laciana who has always reassured me in my most difficult moments, and for having faith in my abilities. Her assistance has always come at the right time, and has helped me in reaching my goals. A special thanks to Jacobus Kats, my best friend, who has helped me reviewing and editing this manuscript throughout the whole process. Without his help my work would have undoubtedly been harder.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .................................................................................. iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ................................................................. iv
LIST OF TABLES .......................................................................... viii
INTRODUCTION ........................................................................... 1

Treasured Possessions: A Developmental Overview .......... 1
   Infancy and early childhood .............................................. 1
   Middle childhood .............................................................. 3
   Adolescence ........................................................................ 4
   Adulthood ............................................................................ 6
   Summary ............................................................................. 7

Possessions and Identity ......................................................... 7
   Infancy and early childhood .............................................. 13
   Middle childhood .............................................................. 13
   Adolescence ........................................................................ 14
   Adulthood ............................................................................ 18
   Summary and Purpose of Study ......................................... 19

METHOD ...................................................................................... 22

Participants ............................................................................ 22
Measures .................................................................................. 23
   Possessions, clothing, and living space ......................... 23
   Identity .............................................................................. 24
   Background information ................................................ 26
Procedure ................................................................................. 26
# LIST OF TABLES

| Table 1 | Participants' Demographic Information | 22 |
| Table 2 | Categories of Objects | 28 |
| Table 3 | Categories of Object, Clothing, and Space Meanings | 31 |
| Table 4 | "Who am I" Identity Label X Most Frequently Named Treasured Possessions | 35 |
| Table 5 | Meanings of the Most Treasured Object In the Five Identity Groups | 36 |
| Table 6 | Most Frequently Named Meanings of Treasured Objects for the "High" vs. the "Low" Identity Groups | 38 |
| Table 7 | Most Frequent Meanings Attributed to "Object That Best Expresses Who I Am" for the "High" vs. the "Low" Identity Groups | 39 |
| Table 8 | Most Frequent Reasons Given to Why Subjects Felt Bedroom Best Expresses Who They are: "High" vs. "Low" Identity Groups | 40 |
| Table 9 | Most Frequent Reasons Given to Why Clothing Best Expresses Who One is With the "High" and the "Low" Identity Groups | 41 |
| Table 10 | Object Most Frequently Named as "Best Expressing Who I Am" | 42 |
| Table 11 | Most Frequently Named Place at Home | 43 |
Table 12  Most Frequently Named Reasons as to "Why My Bedroom Expresses Who I Am".........................44
Table 13  Most Frequent Reasons Given as to Why Clothing Expresses Who One is.........................46
Table 14  Most Frequent Meanings Given as to Why Clothes Make a Statement About an Individual...........47
Table 15  Most Frequent Meanings Given to Why Object Best Expresses Who One is..........................48
INTRODUCTION

The study of the relationship between humans and their possessions began over a century ago when William James wrote of the integration of one's belongings with one's definition of self (James, 1890). Since this time, researchers from such varied fields as anthropology, sociology, psychology, and even business have studied which personal belongings individuals across the life span most treasure, and why. Although it has been implied in these studies that treasured possessions in particular (and personal belongings in general) reflect or mirror the self, this has not been directly or empirically measured. The purpose of the present exploratory study was to examine the extent to which personal belongings reflect the self in an older adolescent sample.

Treasured Possessions: A Developmental Overview

Infancy and early childhood. The earliest writings about treasured possessions focused on the attachments that young children develop to special objects during the early years of life. These writings, which utilized the psychoanalytic approach, addressed the question of why children develop attachments to such objects as teddy bears or blankets. Winnicott (1953) referred to such objects as "transitional objects", and described these as the child's first "not me" possession, i.e., a possession that is "outside" or separated from his or her body (e.g., a blanket, diaper, or teddy bear) but is not yet recognized as part of
the external reality. He felt that these object attachments symbolized the mother when she was not present, and reduced the degree of distress felt by the infant when separated from his or her mother.

Bush, Nagera, McKnight, and Pezzarossi (1973) outlined two types of objects that children become attached to, i.e., primary and secondary transitional objects. Attachment to a primary transitional object is thought to occur between 6 and 9 months of age, and these objects are typically blankets, diapers, or any other soft, cuddly object. Attachment to a secondary transitional object, by contrast, is thought to occur later, sometime between 2 to 3 years of age. These latter objects are commonly some type of stuffed animal. Although it is important to distinguish between primary and secondary objects, no conclusive data show that each functions differently. On the contrary, studies show that both primary and secondary transitional objects reduce the child's anxiety generated by separation from the mother (e.g., Gaddini, 1975).

In their study with monkeys, Harlow and Suomi (1970) found that animals also tend to form attachments to objects. According to their study, objects that are soft to the touch are the ones more likely to provide animals with feelings of comfort and security. The presence of these types of objects was found to increase primates' exploratory behavior and to reduce distress.
Researchers since Winnicott's time generally agree that the development of an attachment to a treasured object during early life is healthy and normal (Gaddini, 1975; Passman, 1979; Stevenson, 1954). The use of these objects has been shown repeatedly to reduce general anxiety and tension, to increase learning performance (e.g., Gaddini, 1975; Passman, 1977), to promote independence and ego autonomy in children, and to help with the separation-individuation process (e.g., Coppolillo, 1967; Stevenson, 1954; Winnicott, 1953). These attachments have even been associated with having an "easier" temperament when children who have them are compared to children who lack such an object attachment (e.g., Garrison & Earl, 1982).

**Middle childhood.** The few studies focusing on the middle childhood years show that objects treasured during early life continue to be important to their owners after the early childhood years. In one study of school-aged children (Sherman, Hertzig, Austrian, & Shapiro, 1981), 50 percent of the subjects reported that they were still attached to their early treasured object. In this study, children near the age of nine tended not to use the object as often as before; however, the treasured object was kept nearby and used for soothing purposes during inactive or stressful times. This finding supports Winnicott's (1953) idea that the use of a treasured object as a soother diminishes with age. No significant differences were found between children who used
these objects and those children who were no longer attached to (or who never had) an object.

Other studies have shown that school-aged children tend to name objects such as teddy bears, dolls, games, childhood toys, and sports equipment as their most treasured possessions (Furnham & Jones, 1987; Kamptner, 1991). These objects are thought to provide security and comfort in distressing situations (Bush, 1974; Winnicott, 1953), to be soothing during bedtime, and also to be used during inactive time such as traveling and watching TV (Kamptner, Kayano, & Peterson, 1989).

During this period of life, the use of these objects tends to be “active” where being able to physically manipulate objects is very important to their being valued (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Kamptner, 1991). This is thought to reflect the egocentric tendencies of children because during this phase they tend to give more value to the experience or enjoyment obtained from the object (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Rochberg-Halton, 1984).

Adolescence. In the literature on adolescents and their treasured objects, there are currently two theories: the psychoanalytic/clinical approach and the developmental approach. Psychoanalytic/clinical researchers view objects treasured during adolescence as functioning similar to those during childhood, i.e., they provide comfort and security to
the child in the absence of her or his mother and help the adolescent cope with the separation-individuation process from parents (by reducing anxiety and promoting self autonomy) (e.g., Berg, 1982; Blos, 1967; 1976; Downey, 1978; Free & Goodrich, 1985).

By contrast, developmental researchers view objects treasured during adolescence as reflecting the development of adolescents (e.g., Belk, 1991b; Furby, 1978a; Kamptner, 1995), i.e., they provide teens with feelings of freedom and independence, and they increase the teenager’s social network which may assist adolescents in developing relationships with friends and feeling a sense of belonging with their peer group (Costello, 1986; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Furby, 1978a; Furnham & Jones, 1987; Kamptner, 1991; Weiland, 1955). Studies have found, for example, that objects treasured most during adolescence include automobiles, stereos, small appliances, stuffed animals, memorabilia, clothing, and musical instruments (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Furnham & Jones, 1987; Kamptner, 1991; Weiland, 1955). Kamptner (1995) also noted a distinction between males' and females' treasured objects, with males naming motor vehicles, sports equipment, and music most often, and females naming jewelry and stuffed animals most frequently.

The meanings associated with these objects are predominantly instrumental and utilitarian in nature, with
secondary meanings including the enjoyment, utilitarian, social, and self-related characteristics of the objects (Kamptner, 1991; 1995). "Enjoyment" was the most frequently named meaning associated with males' treasured objects, whereas for females, social meanings were the most salient (Kamptner, 1995).


The most frequently named meanings of these objects include their being reminders of the past, their symbolizing ties with others, their representing shared experiences with others, and their capacity to represent their owners' ideals (e.g., books, piece of art) (Belk, 1985; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Furby, 1978a; Rochberg-Halton, 1984)

During this stage of life, the actual use of treasured objects appears to be more "passive" compared to childhood and adolescence. "Contemplation", for example, seems to be the most salient aspect of the possession, and the "enjoyment" generated by the object is the next most frequently named meaning (Kamptner, 1991). For example, adults find that objects which remind them of shared
experiences with others and memories of the past (e.g., photographs or heirlooms) are especially important. Moreover, the symbolic meanings of the possession are more significant to their owners than are the instrumental and utilitarian meanings. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) suggest that in old age, possessions function as sources of control and mastery, cultivation of self, moderators of affect, symbols of the self and of others, and recollections of the past.

Summary. The above studies suggest that individuals are predisposed to develop attachments to certain specific objects throughout their lives; however, what object is treasured and the meanings and functions these objects have for their owners changes with age. During childhood there is an active manipulation of the object, with the instrumental and utilitarian meanings of the cherished possession dominant during this phase. In adolescence, enjoyment and social meanings of objects become important, although the instrumental and utilitarian meanings of objects are still predominant. Among adults, the use of treasured possessions becomes increasingly passive, and the contemplation, symbolism, and enjoyment meanings of objects become more important.

Possessions and Identity

The idea that treasured possessions have an important role in the development and cultivation of an individual's
identity has been implied in several studies on the meaning
and function of personal possessions. These writings suggest
that possessions are considered extensions of one's self and
that they contribute to the development and maintenance of
self-identity throughout the life-span. Attachments formed
to treasured possessions are believed to help the individual
achieve a sense of autonomy, independence, competence,
accomplishment and control over objects and others (e.g.,
Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Furby, 1978a;
Kamptner, 1991, 1995; Rochberg-Halton, 1984). In addition,
personal possessions are seen to reflect, "cultivate", and
maintain the self at different life stages. At different
ages, the type of object treasured, as well as its function
and meaning, change -- and, as shown below, they reveal the
psychological development of the individual (e.g., Belk,
1988b; Dixon & Street, 1975, Furby, 1978a; Kamptner, 1991;

The notion that possessions are synonymous with the self
is not new. The work of William James (1890) was the first
to emphasize the importance of the object in the development
of an individual's self. He believed that "possession" was
an integral part of the self:

"... a man's Self is the sum total of all he CAN call
his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his
clothes and his house, his wife and children, his
ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his
lands and horses, and yacht and bank-account. All these
things give him the same emotions. If they wax and
prosper, he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die
away, he feels cast down, - not necessarily in the same
degree for each thing, but in much the same way for all"  
(p. 291-292).

James (1890) felt that individuals are a sum of what
they possess and that possessions are therefore
representations of one's identity.

Beaglehole (1932), an anthropologist, was another early
writer on the meaning of property and ownership. He
suggested that in primitive cultures, personal property is
considered part of the self. In describing the meaning of
property, he asserted that appropriation revolves around the
idea that once an individual is in contact with the object
that he or she considers theirs, the object acquires part of
the "life spirit" of the owner, and therefore becomes
integrated into the owner's self. The author believed that
this principle is an innate psychological aspect of human
beings.

In a similar vein, Irwin and Gebhard (1946) assert that
owning an object generates feelings of psychological
closeness toward the object. This closeness indicates a
sense of belonging that goes beyond the physical qualities of
the object because it appears that by owning an object, the
value attributed to the object is enhanced. In a study of
children and adolescents, for example, Irwin and Gebhard
found that the majority of the subjects preferred gifts that
were offered to them in comparison to gifts that were for
other children. The presence or absence of the subject's own
object at that moment and the experimenter's preference over one of the objects did not significantly influence the subject's preference over his/her own gift.

More recently, Belk (1988b, 1989a, 1992) has suggested that a possession is a part of the extended self, particularly when the attachment to the object is emotional. The object in these circumstances is full of symbolic meanings for the owner, but the object can also put the self at risk because the stronger the attachment, the deeper its effect when the possession is lost or stolen. Belk (1988b) also suggested that objects may become incorporated into the self through habituation because of the shared experience the person-object bonding generates over time. For example, an attachment to a favorite armchair is probably slowly formed during the years because of its constant presence in the individual's life.

In addition to attachment to treasured possessions, a person's living space (e.g., bedroom, house, apartment) also has been described as an extension of one's self, i.e., an environment with symbolic meanings that mirrors the self (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Kron, 1983) as well as a "cultivator" of the self, e.g., helping to maintain the integrity of the self by constantly reminding one of who one is (Cooper, 1976; Kron, 1983). For example, hanging degrees on the wall are reminder of one's
accomplishment, and therefore a reminder of one's personal history.

The most frequent explanation given as to why treasured objects are related to one's self revolves around the issue of control. McClelland's (1951) work shows that an individual considers an object as part of the self if s/he exerts control and has power over it. The greater the control and power over the object, the more the object is incorporated into the self. Prelinger (1959) later confirmed that having control over the object was what makes the object part of the self, and also confirmed the idea that being controlled or influenced by the object was important for an object to be seen as a part of the self.

Related to this idea, Furby (1978a) proposed that possessions provide the individual with a sense of control over the environment because an object can also provide social control (i.e., the ability of the owner of the object to have power over who is allowed or not allowed to use the object). In other words, the treasured possession would instigate social power over others, which would then enhance the owner's self-image and contribute toward one's definition of self.

While the studies mentioned above focus on the issue of control as being an essential element of the integration of objects with self, Dittmar (1992) emphasizes the sociopsychological approach and looks at the meanings of
symbols or objects in a social context. She states that “Material objects can symbolically communicate the personal qualities of individuals; that they are, for instance, artistic, extroverted, conventional, adventurous or open-minded. They can also serve as signs of political values, group membership or broad social categories, such as class or gender.” (p. 79). According to Dittmar, the meaning of objects is internalized symbolically because it represents how individuals perceive others interacting with objects in a specific situation. By experiencing this interaction, the individual internalizes and learns through others the appropriate situation in which the object can be used, so s/he can incorporate this symbolic meaning into his/her personality. This is of fundamental importance to the development of identity, according to the author. Therefore, the symbolic meaning of objects becomes part of one’s identity. For example, wearing Calvin Klein clothing is recognized as trendy only if there are other people wearing the same and also if it is perceived by others as trendy clothing. If Calvin Klein clothing is not recognized socially then it loses its social function for the individuals, and its symbolic meaning is not absorbed into these individuals' identity because the social group does not recognize that brand of clothing as part of the individual’s identity. Dittmar (1992) believes that individuals allow material possessions to express who they are and who others
are within their social context. Through the symbolic meaning of possessions, individuals reveal their identity and also can analyze others' identities through their material possessions. Therefore, the author emphasizes that only those material objects that are socially shared have the ability to express one's identity. The reason is that individuals reveal their own identity to others and establish their role when the exterior world recognizes these objects as being part of the individual's identity.

The age-related preferences in treasured objects (and meanings) can thus be re-interpreted within this framework to show that the meaning attributed to the object tends to reflect the developmental stage of one's self. Kamptner (1991) has suggested, for example, such a relationship by comparing object preferences and the psychosocial stages proposed by Erikson.

**Infancy and early childhood.** During this phase, treasured possessions may contribute to the development of the self by bringing security and comfort to the infant (e.g., a teddy bear or blanket) which helps the child to achieve a more independent self in toddlerhood (Kamptner, 1991).

**Middle childhood.** As noted above, children at this stage prefer possessions that provide them with some type of activity (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). Such possessions are believed to help children develop a
sense of industry by increasing their sense of competence and mastery (Kamptner, 1991). Activities that generate enjoyable experiences or successful accomplishments, such as building, act as feedback and validate the child's sense of autonomy.

**Adolescence.** During this stage, possessions such as automobiles, sports equipment, and musical instruments are most treasured. These possessions have been thought to provide teenagers with feelings of independence and/or a sense of accomplishment (Belk, 1988b). For example, being able to have a car provides the adolescent with a sense of independence because it allows him/her to move from place to place without the help of parents or other adults. These feelings of independence and accomplishment help the adolescent to define his/her identity by increasing the self-image and establishing his/her autonomy. Furthermore, through activity adolescents learn what they can and cannot do, which also contributes to their developing notions of who they are (e.g., Belk, 1991b; Furby, 1978a; Kamptner, 1995). Adolescents' attachments to possessions that involve activity-related features are thought to reflect their need to explore the surrounding environment, and gain experiences that will help with the discovery of who they are and what they want for themselves. This idea is supported by other studies (Belk, 1991b; Furby, 1978a), which suggest that
treasured possessions reflect the self or are considered part of the extended self of individuals.

In a study of adolescents' treasured possessions, Kamptner (1995) found that the most important meanings of treasured possessions are the enjoyment, utilitarian, social, and self-related characteristics of the objects. She suggested that the meanings of these treasured objects "mirror aspects of adolescent self, particularly age and sex related features" (p. 313). For males, the utilitarian and enjoyment meanings of possessions are more salient while females tend to value social meanings. It seems that males seek a self that is more independent, autonomous, instrumental, achievement and activity-oriented. A female's self, on the other hand, tends to develop based on social interests and within her interpersonal relationships (Kamptner, 1995). (These differences correspond to cultural expectations regarding male and female behavior, e.g., Kamptner, 1995).

It also is believed that possessions have an indirect and/or additional contribution to the development of self-identity in adolescents through clothing preferences. According to Kamptner's study (1995), clothing preferences, which presented self-related meanings, reflected adolescents' identity. Brusdal (1991) observed that clothes and appearance were especially important for young people, and he believes that clothes are external symbols that help
adolescents to fit into the social context in which they live. (Brusdal also suggests that such external symbols are more important to individuals during a transitional period when their roles are diffuse and the integration with society is still weak. Therefore, the more diffuse the role is, the more important these symbols become). According to his findings, sex differences were apparent in the meanings males and females attributed to their clothes and appearance: females were "more advanced" than males in the use of symbols (i.e., they reported that through the external symbol of clothing they can "play different roles" and show their personality), whereas males presented a "less advanced" use of symbols because the symbols were used to make them appear similar to peers.

Dixon and Street’s (1975) study regarding possessions as part of the self shows that during adolescence, the definition of self-concept includes possessions, along with psychological processes, personal identity, and other people. By comparison, children tend to focus on body parts when defining themselves. The trend toward a more extended definition of the self using objects may be a result of the increasing concern about identity and self-related issues during adolescence. During this stage, advances in cognitive development may alter one's perception of self from a concrete definition of self-concept to a more abstract one,
and from an egocentric to a less egocentric perspective of the self (Montemayor & Eisen, 1977).

Furby (1978a) found that, for teenagers (and also for middle-aged adults), personal possessions have the ability to make people feel important because they presuppose social power and status. It seems that these two groups show great concern about the social value of their possessions. Considering that possessions can provide their owner with a sense of control over the environment and, therefore, social control, it is understandable that individuals can develop the feeling of power by just having a possession. By providing social power, status, and defining individuality, personal possessions boost an individual's self image and consequently contribute to the development of one's identity.

According to Rochberg-Halton (1984), the need of privacy increases in adolescence because it allows teenagers to cultivate their sense of autonomy by enabling teenagers to interact with an environment filled with possessions with which they can identify. He believes that a possession such as a musical instrument may work as a role model for the individual by symbolizing the role of the musician. The symbolic representation such as character or style of the musician can then be assimilated and cultivated into the adolescent’s self. In his study, he also found that adolescents considered their bedroom the most important place in their home. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981)
and Rochberg-Halton (1984) suggested that for adolescents, the bedroom is an area where they can have control over what they do, and where they can have privacy and exercise their autonomy.

Adulthood. For adults, objects such as photographs and heirlooms tend to be treasured more often than other types of objects because they function to "connect" their owner to the past. Rochberg-Halton (1984) proposed that "possession" is the basis for the development of the self because with age, individuals tend to extend the boundaries of the self by moving from attachments to material objects during younger ages, to attachments to memories in older ages. This point of view is shared with other researchers (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Kamptner, Kayano & Peterson, 1989) who emphasize that in adulthood, besides the importance of objects that bring memories from the past, there is an increasing interest in possessions that are related to interpersonal relationships and those objects that help the older adult prepare for the inevitable end of their lives (e.g., familiar objects, heirlooms, photo albums because they provide the individual with sense of continuity, comfort, security, and satisfaction) (Butler & Lewis, 1983). In adulthood, the meanings of possessions include continuity of personal identity, self, control, and mastery. Kamptner (1989) argues that possessions symbolize one's self in three different ways. First, possessions provide maintenance to an
individual's self-identity by helping him/her to cope with the losses that aging causes. Second, possessions can lead individuals to analyze their past life by solidifying their identity through experiences and events that are still alive in their memories. Finally, they can give a perspective of the future by preparing the individual for the end of their lives. Kamptner’s (1991) study, which parallels the psychosocial stages of Erikson, points out that again in adulthood there is an increasing interest in past interpersonal relationships which work as a reference point in maintaining the adult sense of self. This maintenance of the sense of self is parallel to the ego-integrity stage in Erikson's theory.

Summary and Purpose of Study

In summary, the notion that possessions influence the development of one’s identity and are part of the extended self started with James (1890). Following his studies, a substantial amount of theory (but little empirical work) has considered how material possessions influence —or reflect—the development of self. In general, the main purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which personal belongings reflect the self.

If current theories are correct, several expectations would follow, and these comprise the main hypotheses for this study.
First, it was expected that there would be a significant degree of correspondence between an individual's perception of self and the types (and meanings) of possessions treasured. For example, if a person's "social" aspects of self-definition are the most salient for him/her, it would be expected that social meanings of treasured objects would be the most salient.

A second hypothesis was that the more "developed" or "consolidated" one's identity, the more "self" would be projected (i.e., higher degree of correspondence) into possessions, clothes, and living space (i.e., higher scores on EOM-EIS identity achievement scale would yield a higher frequency of "self" meanings attributed to objects, clothes, and living space).

The third goal of this study was to determine which possessions, clothes, and aspects of personal living space (if any) were more likely than others to mirror the self.

Finally, it was also anticipated that the amount of "control" inherent in a possession would make it more likely to reflect the self. Writings over the last 20 years have suggested, as stated earlier, that the more control (or power) one has over an object, the more likely the object is to be integrated into the self (e.g., McClelland, 1951). Since this has not been empirically measured to date, we decided to examine this. If this theory is correct, it would be expected that objects identified by participants as those
that "best express who I am" would be more likely to have "instrumental" as opposed to "symbolic" functions (i.e., allowing their owner to achieve a specific need or goals vs. symbolizing a relationship, the self, or some value or goal.) (see Kamptner 1989; Prentice, 1987).

An older female adolescent sample was used because it is during this time that self-identity is becoming more consolidated (e.g., Erikson, 1968), and we wanted to control for the potential confound of gender.
Participants

Participants were 76 young females who ranged in age from 18 to 24 years and who were from predominantly white, middle-class families (Table 1). Out of one-hundred-eighty questionnaires that were distributed among five introductory psychology courses, 108 were returned. Thirty-two of these questionnaires were discarded for the following reasons: 23 were filled out by males, 6 were completed by females older than 24 years, and 3 were returned incomplete.

Table 1
Participants' Demographic Information (N=76)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Range: 18-24 years old</th>
<th>M = 20.7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Marital Status | 82.9% Single | 7.9% Married | 2.6% Divorced/Separated | (6.6% Other) |

| Ethnicity      | 53.9% Caucasian | 27.6% Hispanic | 9.2% African American | 3.9% Asian | (5.3% Other) |

*(table continues)*
Participants' Demographic Information (N=76)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father's Education (SES)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.8% Graduate or professional degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.0% Graduate from college (B.A. or B.S. degree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.9% Some college (includes A.A. degree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.8% Graduate from high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3% Trade school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6.6% Did not know or did not answer)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were recruited from a mid-sized university located in the southwestern United States. Only females were used since previous studies have shown object preference and meaning to be influenced by gender (e.g., Dittmar, 1989; Dixon & Street, 1975; Kamptner, 1995; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988), and we wanted to eliminate the potential confound of gender.

Measures

A questionnaire comprised of items assessing personal belongings (i.e., possessions, clothing, and living space), identity, and background information was compiled and it utilized the following assessments:

Possessions, clothing, and living space. Items were developed for use in this study to determine participants' most special or important possessions, their feelings about their living space (particularly their most special "place" in the home), and their clothing preferences.
To assess participants' current treasured possessions, participants were first asked to name up to three possessions they considered "most special" or "important", and why these possessions were regarded as such. Participants next were asked to identify the object they own which they feel best expresses who they are (and why) (Appendix A).

Participants were then asked to identify where in their home or apartment they most feel "at home", and why. Next, they were asked to rate the degree to which they felt most comfortable in their bedroom (1="very uncomfortable", 6="very comfortable"). They were also asked to rate how much they felt their bedroom was considered "their space" (1="not at all their space", 6="very much their space"), and why. Finally, participants were asked whether they felt their bedroom expressed who they are, and how/why (Appendix B).

The third part of the questionnaire referred to participants' clothing preferences. Participants were asked whether they felt their clothes expressed who they are, and how/why. They were also asked to what extent they felt their clothes made a statement about them, and why (Appendix C).

Identity. Two instruments were used to assess identity. First, the 64-item Extended Version: Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (EOM-EIS) (Grotevant, Thorbecke, & Meyer, 1982) was used to assess the extent of questioning and commitment in the areas of "ideological" and "interpersonal" identity. The 32-item ideology subscale includes items
assessing occupational, religious, political, and philosophical identity. The 32-item interpersonal subscale consists of items related to friendship, dating, sex roles, and recreation. These items were then used to categorize participants into Marcia's (1966) four identity "statuses:" Achieved, Moratorium, Foreclosed, and Diffused. According to Marcia, the two stages Achieved and Diffused are extreme points of one's identity status. Identity Achievement reflects the presence of crisis and commitment, and Identity-diffusion indicates the absence of crisis experience and commitment. The intermediate stage Moratorium indicates an individual in crisis and with uncertain commitments, and individuals in the Foreclosed stage are not in crisis yet, but to some extent are experimenting commitment. For the purpose of this study only Achieved and Diffused identity statuses were used. To obtain a continuous score for "identity achievement", which quantifies the degree of questioning and commitment in the areas of "ideological" and "interpersonal" identity, participants' scores for the items from the Achieved subscale were then summed with the (reversed-scored) Diffused items. Participants responded to each item on a Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 6=strongly agree). The reliability of the EOM-EIS showed acceptable levels of internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach alphas) which ranged from .42 to .84, and test-retest correlations ranging from .63 to .83. The factorial
validity presented a mean agreement of 96.5% for the 64 items. (Grotevant & Adams, 1984) (Appendix D).

The second identity assessment used was the Twenty Statements Test (TST) (Bujental & Zelen, 1950; Kuhn & McPartland, 1954). In its original form, this scale consists of 20 open-ended statements to the question "What sort of person would you say you are?". It reportedly assesses individuals' self-descriptions, which can be categorized according to a variety of formats, e.g., Kahana and Coe, 1969.

For the purpose of this study, participants were asked to give only five responses instead of the original twenty (Appendix E).

Background information. Finally, participants were asked to record their age, marital status, ethnic background, level of education, and parents' level of education (Appendix F).

Procedure

Students were contacted during their regular class sessions at a local university in southern California. During this first contact they were given a brief description of the study, and were informed that they must be between the ages of 18 and 24 years to be eligible to participate. Extra course credit was given to the students who participated in the study. The questionnaire took approximately 40 minutes to complete.
RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Possession and meaning categories. First, classification schemes for the object categories as well as for the object, clothing, and space meanings were developed. The resulting categorical schemes were based on Kamptner (1995) and were modified to fit the current data. Table 2 shows the categories of objects; Table 3 shows the categories of object, clothing, and space meanings.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01. Stuffed animals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02. Dolls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03. Pillows/blankets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04. Books</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05. Clothing</td>
<td>clothing, hats, purses, shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 Childhood toys</td>
<td>trucks, wagons, toy cars, models, bikes, &quot;toys&quot;, superhero figures, toy soldiers, toy weapons, board games, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07. Sports equipment</td>
<td>sports equipment and accessories, including fishing poles, skateboards, ice-skates, tennis rackets, basketballs, skis, surfboards, bicycles, guns, knives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08. Motor vehicles</td>
<td>primarily cars, but also includes motorcycles, boats, motor-scooters, motor vehicle-related accessories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09. Music</td>
<td>phonograph records, tapes, CDs, &quot;music&quot;, musical instruments, radio, stereo equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Photographs</td>
<td>photos, photograph albums, portraits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Memorabilia</td>
<td>yearbooks, pennants, souvenirs, scrapbooks, mementos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Personal accomplishment</td>
<td>awards, trophies, medals, plaques, school letters, letterman's jacket, homecoming queen crown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Furniture</td>
<td>furniture, antiques, rugs, lamps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. Dishware/silverware/silverware</td>
<td>dishware, china, glassware, silverware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Jewelry</td>
<td>jewelry, watches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Religious items</td>
<td>Bible, torah, rosary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Collections</td>
<td>stamp, coin, shell, baseball cards, rock, and other collections: &quot;collection&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Small appliances</td>
<td>primarily TVs, but also includes VCRs, cameras, typewriters, computers, phones, pagers, video games, clocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Important documents</td>
<td>important documents, records, or papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Money</td>
<td>money, investments, savings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Visual artwork</td>
<td>drawings, paintings, statues, sculptures, figurines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Tools</td>
<td>tools, scientific equipment, handicraft equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Personal items</td>
<td>jewelry boxes, perfume, wallets, flowers, trinkets, eyeglasses, keys, pen, music box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Substance abuse items</td>
<td>drugs, drugs paraphernalia, cigarettes, alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Food and/or food-related appliances</td>
<td>food, candy, refrigerator microwaves, ovens, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Rock-star or idol paraphernalia</td>
<td>includes sports idols, posters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Table 2

Categories of Objects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27. Magazine, comic books</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Car insurance, driver's license</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Written expression items</td>
<td>notes, letters, poetry, journals, diaries, daybooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Bedroom/house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Personal-care items</td>
<td>toothbrush, makeup, hair dryer, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table 3

## Categories of Object, Clothing, and Space Meanings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Utilitarian</strong></td>
<td>object provides utilitarian benefits, e.g., is useful, functional, or fills a need; provides convenience; provides independence, shows independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Enjoyment</strong></td>
<td>object provides enjoyment, &quot;good&quot; feelings, and enhances one's mood; provides feelings of &quot;release&quot;, &quot;escape&quot;, or relaxation; is a distraction or diversion; is entertaining or fun; is soothing or comforting; provides feelings of security, escape, sense of belongingness, show one's feelings, e.g., &quot;I like it&quot; or &quot;I love it&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Intrinsic quality</strong></td>
<td>includes meanings related to physical, functional properties of the object, e.g., the object's monetary worth, uniqueness, irreplaceability, appearance, design, style, or color; the &quot;ambiance&quot; it provides; it is a part of the decor or part of a collection; it's decorated as desired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Memories</strong></td>
<td>object represents or reminds one of a specific occasion or event -- no persons are mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Social</strong></td>
<td>object represents interpersonal or familial ties, e.g., object is a reminder of someone special; was given by or belonged to a family member or other special person; object represents attachment to or love toward another person; has interpersonal qualities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. <strong>Self</strong></td>
<td>object represents or expresses aspects of the owner's self, i.e., it is a reminder or representation of one's self or one's personal history: &quot;it is part of me&quot;, &quot;it looks like me&quot;, it &quot;represents who I am&quot;, or it embodies or expresses one's personal values, goals, or ideals; personal accomplishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. <strong>It's mine</strong></td>
<td>living space is considered an area that belongs only to the owner (e.g., &quot;I don't share with anyone&quot;; &quot;it belongs to me&quot;; &quot;it's my place, I bought it -the house- it's mine&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. <strong>Privacy</strong></td>
<td>living space provides privacy, e.g., &quot;it represents need for place to think&quot;; &quot;it's quiet&quot;; &quot;nobody comes in without permission&quot;; &quot;it is a place to relax, rest&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. <strong>Personal space</strong></td>
<td>space is considered to be under complete control by the owner; and contains all of one's objects which are cherished, e.g., &quot;all of my belongings are there&quot;; the things that I treasure are there&quot;; &quot;it's full of my things&quot;; &quot;no one can tell me how it should be&quot;; I put everything that is mine there&quot;; &quot;all I need is there&quot;; &quot;I can do what I want there&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. <strong>Lack of privacy</strong></td>
<td>space has to be shared with others; use of owner's belongings without permission; intrusion of one's space by another, e.g., someone goes into owner's room without permission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. <strong>Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who am I scale. Since there is no single established guide for scoring the Who Am I scale, a content analysis was first performed on participants' responses. The resulting categories included the following: Social (i.e., involves socialization and interaction with others; e.g., like to be with family and/or friends), Emotional (i.e., describes one's emotional characteristic; e.g., I am sensitive), Activity-related/Behavior (i.e., include some type of activity or behavior related description; e.g., love shopping), Non-Social/Emotional Self Attributes (i.e., self description that is not social or emotional in nature describing who one is; e.g., I am a smart person), and Physical characteristics (i.e., physical description that describes who one is; e.g., I am attractive). These are outlined more completely in Appendix G. Because a single "label" for each subject was necessary in order to proceed with the data analysis in this study, participants were next "categorized" into one of these five "categories" in the following manner. If two or more of their responses were in a particular category, subjects were "categorized" according to this response. For example, if a participant's five responses for this questionnaire item included the following: Social, Emotional, Social, Self-attribute, and Physical, the participant was categorized as "Social". In the very few instances where participants had
two responses in each of two categories, the first two
categories named by the participant were used.

**Analyses**

**Hypothesis 1.** Hypothesis 1 stated that there would be a
correspondence between self-perceptions and the types and
meanings of objects treasured. To test this hypothesis,
crosstabulations were performed between objects named as most
treasured and the "Who Am I" identity groupings. The
treasured objects named most frequently by participants in
each "Who Am I" "category" are shown below in Table 4. (No
subjects were ultimately classified into the Physical
Characteristic identity group; therefore, this category is
not included in the tables).
Table 4

"Who am I" Identity Label X Most Frequently Named Treasured Possessions (N=76)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social</th>
<th></th>
<th>Emotional</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Vehicles</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>Motor Vehicles</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>Photographs</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Items</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Personal Accomplishments</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuffed Animal</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Jewelry</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collections</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Religious Items</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Artwork</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Items</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity/Behavior</th>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Social/Emotional Self-Attributes</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>Motor Vehicles</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuffed Animal</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>Photographs</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>Jewelry</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>Bedroom/House</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Items</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Only the five most frequently named items are listed.

As Table 4 shows, the treasured object mentioned the most frequently by the "Social" group was jewelry, whereas the "Emotional" group named music the most often. The "Activity/Behavior" group named clothing most frequently; and the "Non-Social/Emotional Self-Attributes" group named motor vehicles most frequently.

Next, to determine the correspondence between self-perceptions and meanings of objects treasured, a crosstabulation between object meanings and the "Who Am I" identity groupings was performed. The most frequently named
object meanings for each of the four identity groupings are shown below in Table 5.

Table 5  
Meanings of the Most Treasured Object In the Five Identity 
Groups (N=76)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Emotional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memories</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity/Behavior</th>
<th>Non-Social/Emotional Self-Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memories</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Quality</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Memories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Only the five most frequently named meanings are listed.

These findings suggested that the "Social" group was more likely to treasure their objects for their Social meanings, whereas the "Emotional" group was more likely to cherish their possessions for the Enjoyment meanings they provided. The "Non-Social/Emotional Self-Attributes" group was more
likely to value their particular objects for their utilitarian functions, and the "Activity/Behavior" group attributed Social and Enjoyment meanings the most often to their most treasured objects.

**Hypothesis 2.** For the second hypothesis, it was predicted that the more developed or consolidated one's identity, the "more" one's sense of "self" would be projected into objects. Specifically, it was expected that higher scores on identity achievement (as measured by the EOM-EIS) would be related to higher frequencies of self-related meanings attributed to participants' most valued possessions, clothing, and space.

To test this hypothesis, the mean score for the revised "identity achievement" scale of the EOM-EIS was first obtained (M=136, range 105-174). Participants were then divided into "high", "medium", and "low" identity groups utilizing a tri-median split: the "high" identity group's scores ranged from 151-174; the "medium" group ranged from 128-151, and the "low" group ranged from 105-128.

To test the correspondence between "identity achievement" and possession meanings, the most frequently named meanings attributed to participants' three most treasured possessions by the "high" vs. the "low" identity groups were tabulated and compared (Table 6).
Table 6

Most Frequently Named Meanings of Treasured Objects for the "High" vs. the "Low" Identity Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;High&quot; Identity Group (n=13)</th>
<th>&quot;Low&quot; Identity group (n=22)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memories</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>Memories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Quality</td>
<td>Intrinsic Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It's Mine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data show that the most frequently named meaning attributed to the treasured objects was Social for both groups. Chi squares performed on the High and Low identity groups showed no significant differences between any of the object meanings.

An alternative test of this hypothesis was to examine participants' responses when asked to identify which object(s) (of all those that they own) they say "best expresses" who they are. The most frequently mentioned objects were clothing (29%) and motor vehicles (10%). Meanings attributed to these possessions showed that both the "high" and "low" identity groups named Self meanings the most often, with the "high" identity group naming it significantly
more often, $X^2(1, N=94) = 5.149, p = .02$ (Table 7). The "high" identity group also named Utilitarian meanings significantly more often than did the "low" identity group, $X^2(1, N=14) = 1.143, p = .02$. No other significant difference were found by the two identity groups for the other meanings.

Table 7
Most Frequent Meanings Attributed to "Object That Best Expresses Who I Am" for the "High" vs. the "Low" Identity Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>&quot;High&quot; Identity Group (n=19)</th>
<th>&quot;Low&quot; Identity Group (n=28)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Quality</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, to test the correspondence between identity achievement scores and living space, the "high" and "low" identity groups were compared on the questionnaire item asking participants whether they felt their bedroom expresses who they are¹, and if so, why. Among the responses obtained,

¹ This questionnaire item was used because, in retrospect, we failed to ask which place in the home subjects felt best reflected who they are, and why.
71% answered affirmatively. As Table 8 shows, for those participants who answered yes, both the "high" and "low" identity groups named Self-related reasons (e.g., "It tells a lot about my personality, what I am about", "I decorated it according to my personality", "I have personally placed everything in it, it is a reflection of me") the most often. The high identity group named Self reasons significantly more often than the low identity group \(X^2(1, N=95)=6.579, p=.01\). No other meanings were significantly different for the two identity groups.

Table 8
Most Frequent Reasons Given to Why Subjects Felt Bedroom Best
Expresses Who They are: "High" vs. "Low" Identity Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;High&quot; Identity Group (n=10)</th>
<th>&quot;Low&quot; Identity Group (n=17)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Quality</td>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Intrinsic Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Space</td>
<td>Personal Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Memories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Privacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of Privacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, to test the correspondence between the identity achievement scale and clothing meanings, the "high" and "low" identity groups were compared on the questionnaire item of why participants felt clothing best expresses who they are. Results showed that 91% of the participants felt that their clothes express who they are, and 8% felt that they did not (1% missing). For those who responded affirmatively, there were no significant differences in responses between the High and Low groups for this questionnaire item (Table 9).

Table 9

Most Frequent Reasons Given to Why Clothing Best Expresses Who One is With the "High" and the "Low" Identity Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>&quot;High&quot; Identity Group (n=12)</th>
<th>&quot;Low&quot; Identity group (n=20)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>Intrinsic Quality 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Quality</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>Utilitarian 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Enjoyment 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
<td>Social 4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, the results obtained for hypothesis 2 showed that significantly more participants in the "high" identity group (compared to the "low" identity group) name self-
related meanings for possessions and living space, but not for clothing.

**Hypothesis 3.** Hypothesis 3 investigated which possessions, clothes, and living space were most likely to mirror the self.

First, the possessions named most often as those which "best express who I am" were identified (Table 10).

**Table 10**

Object Most Frequently Named as "Best Expressing Who I Am" 
(N=76)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Vehicles</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Items</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 10, Clothing was most often named as best expressing who one is, followed by Motor Vehicles, Music, Photographs, Jewelry, and Religious Items.

Next, to identify which aspects of living space were more likely to mirror the self, participants were asked a variety
of questions. First, participants were asked which place in their home they felt most comfortable. Results showed that subjects most often named their own bedroom as the most comfortable place at home (Table 11).

Table 11

**Most Frequently Named Place at Home (N=76)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own bedroom</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Living room</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent's bedroom</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then participants were asked how comfortable they felt in their bedroom\(^2\). Results showed that 96% of the participants felt comfortable to very comfortable and only 3% felt uncomfortable in their bedroom on the Likert scale.

Participants were then asked to specify to what degree they felt their bedroom was their own space. Responses

\(^2\) As stated earlier, the question about bedroom was used because, in retrospect, we neglected to ask a more general question regarding living space.
showed that 96% considered their bedroom was "their space"; 3% felt that their bedroom was "not their space".

Of the 96% who felt their bedroom was their own space, the most frequent response as to why participants felt their bedrooms were their "own space" included the following: Privacy 40%, It's Mine 19%, Personal Space 18%, Self 14%, and Intrinsic Quality 8%.

When participants were asked if the bedroom expresses who they are, 71% of the responses were yes, 28% were no (1% missing).

Results were tabulated for those participants who identified reasons why they felt their bedrooms best express who they are. These results are presented in Table 12.

Table 12
Most Frequently Named Reasons as to "Why My Bedroom Expresses Who I Am" (N=52)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meanings</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Quality</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Space</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Not surprisingly, results showed that bedrooms express who their owners are primarily because of self-related meanings (e.g., "It shows who I am by the pictures and knick-knacks around it", "Everything is me in my bedroom", "I decorated it according to my personality", "I have personally placed everything in it, it is a reflection of my personality", "The things on the walls and all over symbolize me in various ways").

Interestingly, results showed that 71% answered positively when asked if their bedroom express who they are. Of this group, 70% of the participants did not share their bedroom with anyone, and 30% had to share their bedroom. Among the remaining 28% that felt that their bedroom did not express who they are, 57% did not share their bedroom and 43% shared their bedroom with someone. Thus, feeling that one's bedroom was an expression of who one is was not directly related to whether or not one had to share a bedroom.

Next, regarding clothing, participants were asked whether they felt that their clothing expressed who they are: 91% answered "Yes", 8% said "No" (1% missing). To determine whether clothing mirrors the self, an analysis of participants' reasons as to why clothes best express who they are was next performed. The results of this analysis are shown below in Table 13.
Table 13

Most Frequent Reasons Given as to Why Clothing Expresses Who One is (N=66)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meanings</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self (e.g., &quot;clothes express who I am&quot;)</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian (e.g., &quot;my clothes tend to be comfortable&quot;)</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Quality (e.g., &quot;my clothes show style&quot;)</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment (e.g., &quot;they make me feel active, good&quot;)</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social (e.g., &quot;how you represent yourself to others&quot;)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, participants also were asked whether they felt their clothing "makes a statement about who they are" to see whether framing the question in this manner would yield responses different from the previous question. Results showed that 75% answered "Yes", 22% answered "No" (3% missing). For those who replied that clothing did make a statement about who they are, responses as to why were tallied below in Table 14. (A more comprehensive definition of each of these categories is outlined in Appendix H).
Table 14
Most Frequent Meanings Given as to Why Clothes Make a Statement About an Individual (N=54)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meanings</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Expression</td>
<td>(i.e., express and/or represent who one is)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Appearance</td>
<td>(i.e., &quot;Shows my external appearance to others&quot;)</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other's Judgment</td>
<td>(i.e., represent other's opinion over one's appearance)</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>(i.e., &quot;Shows my values and beliefs&quot;)</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality Attributes</td>
<td>(i.e., &quot;Show my personality traits&quot;)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results suggest that 50% of subjects attributed Self-Expression meanings as to why clothes make a statement about them.

In sum, the results obtained in hypothesis 3 suggested that clothing, perhaps more so than other objects or living space, tends to be a more "direct" reflection of the self.

Hypothesis 4. This hypothesis investigated whether possessions with control-related meanings are more likely than other possessions to reflect the self. To test this hypothesis, an analysis of the meanings attributed to the "object which best expresses who I am" was performed. Not
surprisingly, results showed that the most frequently named meaning associate with these objects was Self (Table 15).

Table 15
Most Frequent Meanings Given to Why Object Best Expresses Who One is (N=74)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meanings</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Quality</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memories</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, utilizing Kamptner's (1991) classification scheme, these meanings were divided into two categories: "instrumental meanings" (which included Enjoyment, Utilitarian, and Intrinsic Quality); and "symbolic meanings" (which included Self, Social, and Memories). The results showed that 35% of the meanings participants assigned were instrumental, whereas 61% were symbolic. Thus, possessions with control-related (i.e., instrumental) meanings do not, at least in this analysis, appear to be more likely to embody the self.
The purpose of the present exploratory study was to empirically examine the correspondence between self-identity and personal possessions in late adolescence in order to determine the validity of existing theories regarding this relationship. Four hypotheses were investigated to examine this relationship. In general, results showed empirical support for this relationship.

**Hypothesis 1**

Hypothesis 1 proposed that the types of objects treasured and the meanings associated with them by their owners corresponded to self-perceptions. Data showed that individuals categorized into the different identity "groups" (i.e., Social, Emotional, Activity/Behavior, and Non-Social/Emotional Self-Attributes) tended to cherish different types of possessions, and they attributed different meanings to them. Individuals classified into the "Social" identity group named jewelry the most often as their most treasured possessions, and attributed primarily social meanings to their objects. This result coincides with Kamptner, Kayano and Peterson's (1989) finding that jewelry embodies mainly social meanings.

The Emotional group, by contrast, showed a preference for objects involving music, and they attributed primarily enjoyment meanings to these objects. According to Kamptner
(1995), music and other music-related objects (e.g., stereos, CDs, musical instruments, etc.) are thought to function as modifiers of emotions. Perhaps for individuals who are more emotional or sentimental in nature, music provides them with moments to relax, helps in expressing feelings, and can symbolize or help moderate specific emotional experiences.

For individuals categorized into the Activity/Behavior identity group, results showed that they attributed both Social and Enjoyment meanings to their treasured possessions, with clothing as being the most often named by this group. The "social" meanings attributed by this group tended to differ somewhat from the social meanings attributed by the Social group: the Activity/Behavior group appears to value the social status inherent in their possessions. Moreover, these possessions seemed to provide enjoyment and entertainment. This result is in some ways similar to Furby's (1978a) comment that treasured possessions make individuals feel good because of the social power and status inherent in their treasured possessions. Therefore, individuals categorized into this group appear to cherish their possessions because of the enjoyment, entertainment, and sense of belonging to their social group that these possessions provide for their owners.

Subjects categorized into the Non-Social/Emotional Self-Attributes group most often attributed Utilitarian meanings to their most treasured possessions (which were most
frequently cars). This identity group valued their possessions because of the functionality, sense of autonomy, feelings of independence, and the sense of accomplishment which cars provide (i.e., "My first major purchase on my own", "I paid for my car by working two jobs"), which is consistent with Belk's (1988b), Kamptner's (1995), and Weiland's (1955) findings.

There were no participants who were categorized into the Physical Characteristic identity group. This result is not surprising since the use of physical characteristics in self-descriptions are common among children but tend to dissipate with age (Dixon & Street, 1975).

In sum, results for hypothesis 1 suggested that individuals with different "types" of identity tend to value different types of treasured possessions and attribute different meanings to them: i.e., Social people prefer objects with social meanings, the Emotionals like their music because of the enjoyment it provides, Activity/Behavior-oriented individuals value primarily clothing for its enjoyment and a sense of being part of the social context in which they live, and the Non-Social/Emotional Self-Attributes value their possessions because of the functionality, sense of accomplishment, and autonomy they provide.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis two examined whether individuals in the "high" identity group with higher scores on the identity achievement
scale (EOM-EIS) were more likely to "project" their selves into possessions, clothing, and living space. Contrary to expectations, for "most treasured possessions," there were no significant differences between the "high" and "low" identity groups in the meanings attributed to these possessions. This may be explained in light of other studies which have found that Social meanings are overwhelmingly the most frequent meanings attributed to females' most cherished possessions (Kamptner, 1995). The results obtained in this study coincide with other findings that a female's self seems to be predominantly socially-oriented in nature (Gilligan, 1982; Kamptner, 1991; 1995).

When participants' responses to the question of what possession they feel best expresses who they are were analyzed, results were different: the high identity group named Self meanings significantly more often than the low identity group. In adolescence, possessions are thought to contribute to the development and maintenance of self-identity (Erikson, 1968). In the current study, individuals in the high identity group seemed to value their possessions primarily for the "self"-related characteristics, providing some support for the hypothesis that females with a more consolidated sense of self may be more likely to project their selves into possessions.

Living spaces were observed since studies have described them as also being extensions of the self (e.g.,
Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Kron, 1983). This study focused on individuals' perceptions of their own bedrooms. Participants' responses to the question of why they felt their bedroom expresses who they are showed the "high" identity group naming significantly more self-related meanings than the "low" identity group. According to Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) and Rochberg-Halton (1984), an adolescent's bedroom is a place where adolescents can have control over what they do, have privacy and exercise their autonomy, and it is also considered a place where they can cultivate and assimilate the self. Therefore, results showing that the high identity group was more likely to attribute self meanings to their bedrooms was not surprising.

Both the high and low identity groups named Self meanings as the main reason why clothes are an expression of who they are; but there was no significant difference between the two groups in the frequency of this response. This result may be explained by findings of other studies which suggest that clothing most often embodies self-related meanings to the owner, i.e., self is projected into clothing. Kamptner's (1995) findings also showed that more individuals name self-related meanings than any other meanings to their clothes. According to Brusdal (1991), clothes function as external symbols that assist adolescents to feel as part of the social environment. He also stated that females give more
importance to their appearance than males, and therefore females are more likely to rely on clothes to project their personality to others. Perhaps because females in our culture give so much importance to external physical appearance, it was not surprising that we did not find variations between high and low groups. In other words, clothing is so commonly used among females to express the self that in our culture it is understandable why more of the self is projected into their clothing as compared to possessions and bedrooms, especially when we consider the social pressure that emphasizes the importance of external appearance among females.

In summary, findings for hypothesis 2 are mixed: females in both the high and low identity groups attributed social meanings the most often to their most treasured possessions. The high identity group named self meanings significantly more often to "possessions that best express who they are" and to their bedrooms significantly more often than the low identity group. No differences were found between the high and low group on self-related meanings attributed to clothing.

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis investigated which possessions, clothes, and living space features were most likely to reflect one's self. The objects most frequently named as best expressing who one is were clothing, motor vehicles,
music, photographs, jewelry, and religious items. Clothing was the object subjects most frequently named as best expressing who one is. Clothing and one's bedroom may be the most efficient "vehicles" for expressing females selves, at least as indicated by this study.

These results are consistent with findings from other studies which show that clothing is an important vehicle for expressing or communicating one's self to others (Brusdal, 1991; Caplow, 1982). According to Caplow's (1982) and Kamptner's (1988; 1989) studies, the most preferred gift that adults like to receive was clothing. Caplow (1982) believed that clothing provides individuals with a sense of uniqueness since when choosing a piece of clothing it is important to match the style, appearance, age, and gender of the receiver.

As stated earlier, Brusdal (1991) suggested that clothes and appearance are very important for people because clothes are external symbols that help individuals adapt to social demands. The idea that clothes are external symbols can also be seen in this study: when subjects were asked if their clothes make a statement about who they are, 75% answered affirmatively.

Most subjects named "self" meanings in response to the question of why they felt their bedroom expresses who they are. It seems that the bedroom is viewed as a "sanctuary" because of the personalized effort individuals invest when decorating their bedroom. Being surrounded by objects chosen
by themselves appeared to give subjects a sense of autonomy, security, creativity, and accomplishment. Studies have suggested that a person's living space mirrors one's self because of its symbolic meanings (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981), and that it also helps people to maintain their self integrity by reminding them of who they are (Cooper, 1976; Kron, 1983). Studies have also speculated that living space, especially one's bedroom, is the primary place adolescents choose to attain privacy. Privacy is thought to help, and even be necessary for, individuals to cultivate their sense of self, autonomy, and also to allow individuals to build personal experiences by interacting with objects with which they can identify (Rochberg-Halton, 1984).

Hypothesis 4

The final hypothesis stated that the greater the "control" over possessions, the more the self would be reflected by these possessions. In general, this expectation was not confirmed in this study. Findings suggested that when subjects were asked to attribute meanings to possessions that best express "who they are," the meanings attributed to objects were more likely to embody symbolic rather than instrumental meanings.

A closer analysis of the two most frequently named objects that reflect the self, i.e., clothing and automobiles, suggests, however, that these objects have inherent and perhaps indirect control-related qualities. As
mentioned earlier, clothes provide individuals with a sense of control over the surrounding environment by establishing one's social status (Dittmar, 1991) and communicating or expressing one's self to others (Brusdal, 1991). Comments expressed by subjects in the current study support this notion: "It is part of the way you represent yourself to others", "People can tell what kind of person I am by the clothes I wear", "They show others my interests". In the search for a social position these individuals may be exercising their social control (or desire for belongingness) over others through their clothing style. In other words, through clothing style individuals can have a better notion of who they are, and how they fit into the social group.

Motor vehicle, (i.e., cars) show a different type of "control". It has been written elsewhere that objects like cars are incorporated into the self when individuals have control and power over them (McClelland, 1951), and also when subjects are influenced by these objects (Prelinger, 1959). These two concepts suggest that a car provides the owner with control of the object per se, and also control over circumstances involving a car. For example, cars can provide independence because they allow people to visit friends and go shopping any time they want. They can also promote autonomy, freedom, and social status by helping individuals to become integrated into the social context they live.
These findings suggested that people are perhaps giving and/or associating other meanings to their treasured possessions without being fully aware of why they really think these objects express who they are.

Limitation and Future Research

One of the major limitations of this exploratory study was the lack of adequate instrumentation to measure self-identity. Very few instruments are available to measure identity in an older adolescent sample, and these were limited since the coding system presented was fairly arbitrary.

Future research could investigate whether these same findings hold among a male sample, since other studies have found significant differences between male and female’s selves (e.g., Gilligan, 1982), and as stated earlier, in the types of and meanings attributed to their belongings. Finally, it would be interesting to pursue the issue of control, especially because very little empirical work has been done in this area. It would be enticing to examine in more depth the role of control in cherished possessions since this study found that control might be inherent in possessions without the complete awareness of the owner.

Implications and Conclusions

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the extent to which personal belongings reflect the self in an older adolescent sample. The findings illustrated in this
study showed the following: first, there was a considerable
degree of correspondence between self-perceptions and the
types and meanings attributed to treasured possessions.

Second, results showed a relationship between having a
defined sense of self and projecting one's "self" into
possessions. Differences between "high" and "low" identity
groups' scores on the identity scales showed significant
differences in the likelihood of participants projecting
their "self" into "objects that best express who I am", and
also bedrooms.

Third, results showed clothing was considered the object
that best expresses who one is. Bedrooms were also found to
reflect the self because of the self meanings attributed to
them, i.e., participants identified with their bedrooms
because they believed they are a reflection of their
personality.

Finally, findings in this study of control-related
meanings of objects that best expresses the self showed some
inconsistencies with previous studies. However, the two most
frequently named "objects that best express who I am", i.e.,
clothing and cars, indirectly present significant control-
related qualities that may not be obvious to the owner.

In conclusion, the overall results of this study showed
support for most of the claims of current theories that
treasured possessions are indeed a reflection of one's self.
However, these findings were more speculative than
conclusive; therefore, more empirical investigation should be done in order to verify and complement the validity of these results.
Appendix A

**Treasured Possessions Questionnaire**

Please read each question carefully, and answer each thoroughly. If you have any questions or are unsure of what a question is asking, please ask!

The questions below ask about the special things you own, your home, and your clothes. Please read each question very carefully and answer each item thoroughly. When being asked about the things you own, please do NOT include a person, animal, or plant.

1. Of all the things you own, which is/are the most special or treasured to you? Name up to three objects. (Please do not include a person, animal, or plant.)

   Objects: Why object is important to me:
   1) ____________________________________________
      ____________________________________________
   2) ____________________________________________
      ____________________________________________
   3) ____________________________________________
      ____________________________________________

3. Of all the things you own, what object or (objects) best express who you are? ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   a) Why do you think this object best expresses who you are?
      ____________________________________________
      ____________________________________________
Appendix B

Living Space Questionnaire

1. Where in your house or apartment do you feel most "at home"?

   a) Why? 

   b) Does this space express who you are?

      □ yes  □ no

2. How "at home" or comfortable do you feel in your bedroom?

   1  2  3  4  5  6

   very uncomfortable  |  very comfortable

3. How much do you feel it is "your space"?

   1  2  3  4  5  6

   not at all "my space"  |  very much "my space"

   a) Why? 

   b) Does this space express who you are?

      □ yes  □ no

   c) How/why does it express who you are? 

      

62
Clothing Questionnaire

1. Do you feel your clothes express who you are?
   □ yes  □ no

2. How do you feel your clothes express or do not express who you are?
   ____________________________________________

3. Do you think your clothes make a statement about you?
   □ yes  □ no

   a) Why or why not? ________________________________________
      ________________________________________
EOM-EIS Identity Scale

III. Read each item and indicate how it reflects your own thoughts and feelings. If a statement has more than one part, please indicate your reaction to the statement as a whole. Circle the response that best describes yourself.

1. I haven’t chosen the occupation I really want to get into, and I’m just working at whatever is available until something better comes along.

2. When it comes to religion I just haven’t found anything that appeals and I don’t really feel the need to look.

3. My ideas about men’s and women’s role are quite similar to those of my parents. What’s good enough for them is good enough for me.

4. There’s no single ‘life style’ which appeals to me more than another.

5. Some of my friends are very different from each other. I’m trying to figure out exactly where I fit in.

6. I seem only to get involved in recreational activities when others ask me to join them.

7. I haven’t thought much about what I look for in a date. We just go out to have a good time.

8. Politics is something that I can never be too sure about because things change so fast. But I do think it’s important to know what I can politically stand for and believe in.

9. I’m still trying to decide how capable I am as a person and what jobs will be right for me.
10. I don't give religion much thought and it doesn't bother me one way or other.

11. I have lots of different ideas of how marriage might work in the future and I'm trying to arrive at some comfortable position.

12. I'm looking for an acceptable perspective for my own "life style" view, but haven't really found it yet.

13. Even if my parents disapproved, I could be a friend to a person if I thought he/she was basically good.

14. While I don't have one recreational activity I'm really committed to, I'm experiencing numerous leisure outlets to identify one I can truly enjoy.

15. My dating standards are flexible, but in order to change, it must be something I really believe in.

16. I haven't really considered politics. It just doesn't excite me much.

17. I might have thought about a lot of different jobs, but there's never really been any question since my parents said what they wanted.

18. A person's faith is unique to each individual. I've considered and reconsidered it myself and know what I can believe.

19. I'm not ready to start thinking about how marriage couples should divide up family responsibilities yet.
20. After considerable thought I've developed my own individual viewpoint of what is for me and ideal "life style" and don't believe anyone will be likely to change my perspective.

21. My parents know what is best for me in terms of how to choose friends.

22. I have one recreational activity I love to engage in more than any other and doubt I'll find another I'd enjoy more.

23. When I'm on a date, I just like to "go with the flow."

24. I guess I'm pretty much like my folks when it comes to politics. I follow what they do in terms of voting and such.

25. I'm really not interested in finding the right job, any job will do. I just seem to flow with what is available.

26. I'm not so sure what religion means to me. I'd like to make up my mind but I'm not done looking yet.

27. My ideas about men's and women's roles have been drummed into me by my family.

28. My own views on a desirable life style were taught to me by my parents and I don't see any need to question what they taught me.

29. I've never had any real close friends. It would take too much energy to keep a friendship going.

30. I join my friends in leisure activities, but really don't seem to have a particular activity I pursue systematically.
31. Sometimes I wonder if the way other teenagers date is the best way for me.

32. There are so many different political parties and ideals. I can't decide which to follow until I figure it all out.

33. It took me a while to figure it out, but now I really know what I want for a career.

34. Religion is confusing to me right now. I keep changing my views on what is right and wrong to me.

35. I know what my parents feel about men's and women's roles, but I pick and choose what I think is best for myself.

36. In finding and acceptable viewpoint to life itself I find myself engaging in a lot of discussions with others and some self exploration.

37. I couldn't be friends with someone my parents disapproved of.

38. My parents recreational preferences are good enough for me. I'm content with the same activities.

39. My rules or standards about dating have remained the same since I first started going out and I don't anticipate that they will change.

40. I've thought my political beliefs through and realize I can agree with some and not other aspects of what my parents believe.

41. My parents had it decided a long time ago what I should go into for employment and I'm following their plans.
42. I've gone through a period of serious questions about faith and can now say I understand what I believe in as an individual.

43. I've been thinking about the roles that husbands and wives play a lot these days, but I haven't made a final decision for myself yet.

44. My parents views on life are good enough for me, I don't need anything else.

45. I've had many different kinds of friends, but now I have a clear idea of what I look for in a friendship.

46. I've tried numerous recreational activities and have found one I really love to do by myself or with friends.

47. The standards or "unwritten rules" I follow about dating are still in the process of developing. They haven't completely jelled yet.

48. I'm not sure about my political beliefs, but I'm trying to figure out what I can truly believe in.

49. It took me a long time to decide but now I know for sure what direction to move in for a career.

50. I attend the same church as my family has always attended. I've never really question why.

51. There are many ways that married couples can divide up family responsibilities. I've thought about lots of ways, and now I know exactly how I want it to happen for me.

52. I guess I just kind of enjoy life in general, and I don't see myself living by any particular viewpoint to life.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53. I don't have any close friends. I just like to hang around with the crowd and have a good time.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. I've been experiencing a variety of recreational activities in hopes of finding one or more I can really enjoy for sometime to come.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. I've dated different types of people and now know exactly what my own &quot;unwritten rules&quot; for dating are.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. I really have never been involved in politics enough to have made a firm stand one way or the other.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. I just can't decide what to do for an occupation. There are so many that have possibilities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. I've never really questioned my religion. If it's right for my parents it must be right for me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. Men's and women's roles seem very confused these days, so I just play it by ear.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60. After a lot of self-examination I have established a very definite view on what my own life style will be.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. I know my parents wouldn't approve of some of my friends, but I haven't decided what to do about that yet.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. All of my recreational preferences were taught to me by my parents and I haven't really felt the need to learn any other.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. I would never date anyone my parents disapproved of.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. My folks have always had their own political and moral beliefs about issues like abortion and mercy killing and I've always gone along accepting what they have.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

Who am I?

What sort of person would you say you are? In other words, how would you describe yourself as a person? Please make 5 statements about yourself on the lines below. You can start each sentence with "I ... "

1.________________________________________
2.________________________________________
3.________________________________________
4.________________________________________
5.________________________________________
Appendix F

Background Information

1. Your age: _______________________

2. Your sex (check one): □ male □ female

3. Your current marital status (check one):
   □ single
   □ married
   □ separated/divorced
   □ widowed
   □ other _______________________

4. What is your ethnic background? (check one)
   □ Asian
   □ African American
   □ Caucasian
   □ Hispanic
   □ other _______________________

5. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (check one):
   □ have not finished high school
   □ graduated from high school
   □ trade school
   □ some college (includes A.A. degree)
   □ graduate from college (B.A. or B.S. degree)
   □ some post-graduate work
   □ graduate or professional degree
   □ (specify) _______________________

8. What was the highest grade in school (or level of education) your mother completed? _______________________

9. What was the highest grade in school (or level of education) your father completed? _______________________

Appendix G

Identity Group Descriptions

1. **Social** - refers to self-descriptions that involve socializing and interacting with others, e.g., like to be with family and/or friends, like to work with children, friendly, easy going, helpful, cheerful).

2. **Emotional** - refers to self-descriptions of one's emotional characteristic or state, e.g., sensitive, thoughtful, warm, shy, happy, moody, spiritual, sympathetic.

3. **Activity-related/Behavior** - include descriptions that involve some type of activity, e.g., love sports, adventures, and the outdoors; love shopping, travel, work; enjoy reading, is a procrastinator, lazy.

4. **Non-Social/Emotional Self-Attributes** - non-social, non-emotional attributes, includes intellectual, behavioral and personal quality attributes, e.g., intelligent, logical, analytical, perfectionist, competitive, pleasant, dependable, loyal, assertive.

5. **Physical Characteristics** - refers to descriptions of one's physical appearance, e.g., tall, young, beautiful, blond.
Appendix H

Meanings Attributed to Clothing

1. Physical Appearance/Characteristics - refers to how clothes represent or communicate one's external physical appearance to others (e.g., show that I have taste or style, people notice me, I dress to impress, I dress nice, show I am concerned about my appearance).

2. Values - represent one's moral values, or what one believes is appropriate: I dress conservatively, it (how I dress) demands respect.

3. Personality Attributes - expresses one's personality trait (e.g., show I am young, I care what I look like).

4. Express "Self" - show that clothing express and/or represent who one is and how they feel (e.g., show what I like to do, they are a way of expression, clothes say a lot about every person, they describe what I feel, they show others my interests).

5. Other's Judgment - refers to others' judgments over one's clothing style and the first impression one makes through their clothing (e.g., people do judge on appearance, people
judge and base their approval at others by the clothes they wear, they are what people notice first, everyone judges people on their first impressions, they are part of what people see first).

6. Other
Appendix I

Informed Consent

Dear Student,

I am a graduate student at California State University, San Bernardino, and I am conducting a study on treasured possessions. I am interested in finding out what possessions young adults treasure the most, and why.

I am writing to ask for your participation in completing a questionnaire which asks about your most treasured possessions, clothing preferences, and living space.

This study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Laura Kamptner, Professor of Psychology. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of California State University, San Bernardino.

Your participation is voluntary, and simply involves completing a questionnaire. The questionnaire takes about 30 to 40 minutes to complete. Your responses (and participation) are completely confidential; no identifying information other than age and gender will be recorded. Of course, your are free to discontinue your participation at any time and without penalty. By answering the questionnaire and returning to JB-105 you will be eligible to get an extra credit slip. We will be happy to share the group results of this study with you as soon as they are available.

Although there are no anticipated risks or benefits to your as an individual for participating in this study, the information collected will be very helpful in better understanding the importance and meanings of possessions in adolescents' lives. If you have any concerns or questions during or after your participation, please feel free to contact us at 880-5582 . Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Dr. Laura Kamptner
Professor, Psychology

Vanda Yamaguchi
M.A.-Candidate in psychology

Please check below if you are interested in participate in this study.

☐ Yes, I am volunteering my participation in this study.
Debriefing Statement

Thank you for completing the Treasured Possessions questionnaire. The main purpose of this study was to better understand what personal possessions are most valued by adolescents, and why. Studies to date suggest that personal belongings, clothing, and living space are all important parts of our everyday lives that help to "remind" us of who we are, what we value, and what we believe in. The main purpose of this study was to sample adolescents to provide support for existing theories about the importance of, and the role of, possessions in adolescents' developing ideas about who they are.

We anticipate that the group results of this study will be available after June 1, 1998. Please contact us after this time if you are interested in the group results of this study.

Please contact Dr. Laura Kamptner 880-5582 or myself if you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this study. Thank you again for helping us out in this project.

Sincerely,

Dr. Laura Kamptner, PhD.

Vanda Yamaguchi, M.A. candidate
REFERENCES


Transitional phenomena in the analysis a


