

Self and others' perceptions of "Crass materialism"

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Many studies have been completed in the field of social psychology examining relationships between self-report and others' perceptions of the self. None have been conducted, however, using a measure of "crass materialism". Additionally, the majority of existing empirical research on crass-materialism comes from work with business majors (Richins and Dawson, 1992; Belk, 1985, 1992). No data on levels of materialism have been reported concerning teachers or education majors.

Fifty pre-service teachers at Lewis-Clark State College, Lewiston, Idaho, USA, completed the Belk materialism scales (Belk, 1985, 1992; Ger & Belk, 1995). The "subjects" reported themselves to be 76% female, 96% European-American, 2% Hispanic, 2% Native American, 56% believers in some Christian Faith, 44% belonged to no religion, and mean age was 25.5 years (s.d.= 6.8). Those 50 subjects nominated 3 friends and family members ("informants") to confidentially complete the Belk materialism scales about the subjects themselves. Informants were sent a cover letter explaining the study, a form signed by the subject stating that they knew the informants would confidentially complete the questionnaire about them, a stamped envelope addressed to the principal investigator, and the Belk scales (modified for the 3rd person format). Of the possible 150 informant completed Belk scales, 135 were completed and returned to the researchers, with all subjects receiving scales from at least 2 of their informants.

The latest version of the Belk materialism scales (Ger & Belk, 1995) contains 21 likert-type items: 9 of which tap "nongenerosity", 4 of which tap "possessiveness", 5 which tap "envy", and 3 which tap "preservation" (collecting and keeping mementos). The subjects' overall materialism scores were correlated with the averages of the informants' scores. That is, each

subject had 2 or 3 informants' scores averaged, and then correlated with each subject's own completion of the Belk materialism scales. The Pearson  $r$  was .4193 ( $p=.003$ ) and highly significant. This indicates a moderately high level of similarity between how materialistic one sees one's self and how materialistic one's friends and family perceive one to be.

A subject's overall Belk materialism score could range from a low of 21 (NOT materialistic) to 105 (very materialistic). The subjects' self-reported scores demonstrated a mean of 54.7 (s.d.=8.48), and their informants' reports showed a mean of 53.0 (s.d.=5.97), showing a non-significant trend for the informants to see the subjects as less materialistic than the subjects saw themselves.

Ger & Belk (1995) offer a variety of convenience samples, of business majors and MBAs, from several countries, with which we can compare these results. In the following list, N = the number of subjects, and M = the mean materialism score: a) Romania, M = 63.13 (N = 69), b) USA, M = 61.12 (N = 228), c) New Zealand, M = 60.54 (N = 60.54), d) Ukraine, M = 59.86 (N = 81), e) Germany, M = 59.16 (N = 103), f) Turkey, M = 59.12 (N = 357), g) Israel, M = 58.88 (N = 56), h) Thailand, M = 58.25 (N = 107), i) India, M = 57.74 (N = 31), j) U.K., M = 56.54 (N = 91), k) France, M = 56.47 (N = 47), and l) Sweden, M = 53.21 (N = 70). As Ger and Belk (1995) did not report the standard deviations of their samples, we cannot statistically compare our results with theirs. However, it appears that this sample of American education majors is less materialistic than business majors in 11 of the 12 nation samples above, and notably, much less than the American business majors.

## References

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