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Self-Disclosure About Cherished Possessions: Effects on Roommate Rapport, Territoriality and Loneliness

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SELF-DISCLOSURE ABOUT CHERISHED POSSESSIONS: EFFECTS ON

ROOMMATE RAPPORT, TERRITORIALITY, AND LONELINESS

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to two generations. First, this is dedicated to the generation who came before me, namely my parents, Robert and Judith Smejkal, who taught me the value of an education, supported me in all my endeavors, and taught me without their realization how sometimes the most inexpensive possessions are those that can carry the most value. Lastly, this dissertation is dedicated to the next generation, specifically my son, Carson Smejkal, whom I hope will learn that his cherished possessions will assist him in finding what is truly valuable.

ABSTRACT

This study focused on how self-disclosure about cherished possessions between female

freshmen college roommates affected their levels of rapport, territoriality, and loneliness.

The research was conducted at a Midwestern university during the first two weeks of the

Fall 2011 semester with roommates who were previously unacquainted prior to

cohabitation. The study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, participants were

administered three pre-tests during the first week of the semester. In the second phase,

they were asked to come back a week later and engage in a self-disclosure session with

each other. Roommates in the control group self-disclosed about their textbooks, while

roommates in an experimental group self-disclosed about their cherished possessions.

Results indicated that while the topic of cherished possessions did not have a significant

effect on rapport, territoriality, or loneliness, the passage of time between the pre-tests

and the post-tests did yield significant effects for rapport, some areas of territoriality, and

loneliness.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As members of a consumer society, humans, especially those in Western culture,

appear to be in a constant state of purchasing, updating, renovating, and then disposing of

material possessions. While many of the objects people possess serve a utilitarian or

aesthetic function, some of these items carry more than monetary or superficial value.

Possessions such as photographs, heirlooms, souvenirs, and gifts from family and friends

carry a less tangible value than something that can be measured in marketable terms. The

intrinsic worth of these special objects can be very powerful and personal. Although they

are without words, they have the ability to speak to who we are as human beings. The

possession some values is a window into that person's self (Richins, 1994). These

possessions are, in a sense, priceless to the owner and are virtually irreplaceable. They

inspire the romantic notion of going into a burning home to save them. Objects that carry

this brand of special meaning to an owner have been dubbed through much research as

cherished [emphasis added] (Curasi, Price, & Arnould, 2004; Dyl & Wapner, 1996;

Kroger & Adair, 2008; Price, Arnould, & Curasi, 2000; Whitmore, 2001).

While studies on cherished possessions have focused on such topics as the

extended self (Ahuvia, 2005; Belk, 1988; Tian & Belk, 2005), disposition (Lastovicka &

Fernandez, 2005; Price, et al., 2000), identity formation (Mehta & Belk, 1991; Whitmore,

2001), and meaning (Kamptner, 1989; Kroger & Adair, 2008; Richins, 1994), virtually

no research has focused on the self-disclosure of information and feelings individuals

have about each other's cherished possessions. A study by Cairns (2001) examined the cathartic effects that talking about one's cherished possessions had on women in therapy, but this research only focused on a linear communication process. The dialogue and self-disclosure between two or more people about their cherished possessions has yet to be studied.

Since the topic of cherished possession self-disclosure between individuals has previously been unexamined, it was important to focus this topic in a manner that not only contributed to the body of knowledge about cherished possessions, but also examined effects such self-disclosure could have on a specific population. For the purpose of this study, the population examined was female college freshmen roommates.

College roommates are a unique population, primarily because many of them are unacquainted with one another prior to cohabitation. Getting along in a shared space can be a challenge for people who already have an established relationship, much less those who have never met.

Research on roommates, in general, is fairly sparse, and the role that cherished possessions play in a shared living space is nonexistent. Roommates spend a significant amount of time together communicating, but no research has examined the communication between roommates about their possessions, especially ones of special value.

Sharing a living space with someone can yield obvious challenges, especially if one is experiencing it for the first time, such as a college freshman. University officials understand that healthy roommate relationships are essential, since a poor relationship with a roommate can lead to lower grades, low student retention, and negative attitudes

towards the university (Kuh, Kinzie, Shuh, & Whitt, 2005; Schroeder & Marble, 1994). The more liking and respect roommates shared for each other, the more successful their relationship turned out to be (Kurtz & Sherker, 2003). In addition, the more cooperative roommates were with one another, the more tolerant they would be in a shared space (Sinha & Mukherjee, 1996). Communication is the nucleus of successful roommates, so a study about roommate communication is important.

Statement of the Problem

Since roommates share space, it is important to understand if personal possessions, especially ones of emotional value, play a role in that space as they relate to feelings of rapport, territoriality, and loneliness. Because virtually no research has been conducted on roommates' cherished possessions, a study on the effects of communicating about one's cherished possessions in a shared space could be beneficial to roommates, residence hall officials, and for the fields of self-disclosure and cherished possessions.

The purpose of the present study was to determine what insights can be gained when college freshmen roommates, who were previously unacquainted prior to cohabitation, engaged in the process of self-disclosing about each other's cherished possessions, specifically examining the level of rapport with each other, feelings of territoriality, and feelings of loneliness after such disclosure.

Background

While humans have owned and treasured certain personal possessions for centuries, the first significant study on such possessions was not published until Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) interviewed 80 families in Chicago about the feelings they held towards certain objects in their home. Their seminal work spurred

other research, primarily spearheaded by a series of studies by Belk (1983, 1984, 1985, 1988).

An individual's possessions can reveal significant details about his or her life. Belk's (1988) groundbreaking research proposed that possessions extended the self to reflect an individual's identity. His research has been cited in nearly every study of cherished possessions since 1988. Ahuvia's (2005) study supported Belk's thesis that objects and identity construction were linked.

While Belk (1988) did not directly discuss cherished possessions, he did lay the groundwork that has been followed by many consumer researchers who have studied cherished possessions and the capabilities they have to reflect identity and create meaning in people's lives. The term *cherished possessions* [emphasis added], however, was not used by every researcher who studied personal possessions. Terms such as special, treasured, inalienable, and others implicitly suggested the same definition (Cairns, 2001; Curasi, et al., 2004; Hill, 1991; Price, Arnould, & Curasi, 2000; Richins, 1994).

Research on possessions has focused on several areas. Some cherished possession research centered around families and their irreplaceable possessions (Curasi, et al., 2004; Ekerdt & Sergeant, 2006). Other research examined how people perceived and valued their possessions (Ciarrochi & Forgas, 2000). Identity formation and maintenance with respect to possessions was also heavily studied (Ahuvia, 2005; Belk, 1988; Mehta & Belk, 1991; Tian & Belk 2005; Whitmore, 2001). A major subject area of numerous studies examined older adults and their cherished possessions (Chapman, 2006; Ekerdt & Sergeant, 2006; Kamptner, 1989; Kroger & Adair, 2008; Shenk, Kuwahara, & Zablotsky, 2004; Sherman, 1991).

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Chapman (2006) discovered that special possessions helped older people create meaning in their lives. Possessions helped organize an individual's social world. People, as they advanced in age, became increasingly attached to their homes and possessions (Shenk et al., 2004). Late-life adults often gave special objects heightened significance so they could provide an anchor to people, events, etc. in their lives.

When it becomes apparent for adults to transition from their home to a nursing facility, the emotion of leaving their things behind can be very challenging. Many residents, however, bring their cherished possessions with them as a way to bridge the past with the present. Wapner, Demick, and Redondo (1990) surveyed nursing home residents about their cherished possessions and discovered that in comparison to those without cherished possessions, residents who had cherished possessions adapted better to their new surroundings. Kroger & Adair (2008) also focused on the symbolic functions special possessions provided to late-life adults when transitioning to a nursing facility. Their objects were said to have qualities that helped them cope during difficult moments in their lives.

This notion of using cherished possessions as a means to cope during difficult times was seen in several other studies (Cairns, 2001; Sherman, 1991). These studies have shown that cherished possessions help people among various age groups cope. Objects that carried special value to individuals assisted them during the grieving process (Gibson, 2004; Kompter, 2001; Sherman, 1991). Cherished possessions were also seen to help young people, as well. Drawing from interviews with children and adolescents, Dyl and Wapner (1996) revealed that special possessions helped solve problems and provided them with emotional release. The use of these transitional objects was well documented

(Dyl & Wapner; Sherman & Hertzig, 1983; Winnicott, 1953; Wolf & Lozoff, 1989).

The importance of cherished possessions in the lives of individuals was additionally evidenced by the calculated thought people put into who would inherit their cherished items when they moved into a nursing facility or eventually passed away. Disposition or disbandment of cherished possessions was seen as "acts with social significance" (Ekerdt & Sergeant, 2006, p. 193). In other words, a social element of communicating about the special value of such possessions was seen as an important part of the process of disbandment.

Stories about the object often accompanied this transfer (Dant, 1999; Lastovicka & Fernandez, 2005; Pratt & Fiese, 2004), and those who disposed of cherished possessions to people who were close to them wanted to insure this inalienable wealth was taken care of by the receivers (Curasi et al., 2004). The stories about the cherished possessions became imbedded in the object and thus provided significance to the next generation of owners. The value of communicating stories about their possessions to a receiver was seen as an important process to many who gave away their things, even if those objects were given to complete strangers (Lastovicka & Fernandez, 2005).

Stories, like cherished possessions, have been known to carry great significance to the sender and the receiver. "Possessions to which there is attachment help narrate a person's life story…" (Kleine, Kleine, & Allen, 1995, p. 327). Essentially, their research suggested that possessions, themselves, told stories. Stories that were relayed to people provided meaning and connected individuals together in society (Atkinson, 2002). In addition, the research on how stories gave people an opportunity to heal (Lesho & Block, 2005), benefit mentally and physically (Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999), and therapeutically

cope (Bergner, 2007; Cairns, 2001; Freeman, 1991; East, Jackson, O'Brien & Peters, 2010; Parker & Wampler, 2006) was extensive. In other words, communicating to others in a personal and emotional way was seen as a positive way to connect with others, learn about one's self, and benefit both psychologically and physiologically.

Telling stories about one's life and self-disclosing information about oneself is essentially the same thing. Both are related to communicating with others. Both help others understand more about the person who is self-disclosing or telling stories about one's self. The benefits of self-disclosing to others are nothing new. Jourard and Lasakow (1958) were some of the first researchers who studied self-disclosure and its effects. For example, Jourard and Lasakow and Jourard (1959) found that self-disclosure was positively correlated with the level of liking for another person. Several other studies have supported the link between self-disclosure and liking (Collins & Miller, 1994; Gelman & McGinley, 1978; McAllister, 1980). Collins and Miller specifically said that the communication between two people increased the closeness of the relationship.

The formation of relationships occurred in no small part due to self-disclosure (Newcomb, 1961). Altman and Taylor (1973) contended that self-disclosure was important to the formation of close relationships. Their theory of social-penetration, which contended that as people got to know one another, the level of the subject matter discussed grew in breadth and depth. In other words, when people first met, they discussed few topics and at a fairly superficial level. As the relationship grew, more topics were discussed and at a deeper level. Self-disclosure was at the heart of the social-penetration process. "It [self-disclosure] adds excitement and develops intimacy within our relationships because we are communicating information about ourselves" (Sirin,

2008, p. 288).

Reis and Shaver (1988) suggested that when individuals self-disclosed and responded to each other, the level of intimacy between the two participants increased. A study by Laurenceau, Barrett, and Pietromonaco (1998) extended this idea and contended that self-disclosure on an emotional level, specifically, was a greater predictor of intimacy. In other words, self-disclosures of an emotional nature, rather than those that were more factual, produced greater intimacy between individuals. Ajzen (1977) suggested that people who disclosed more intimate information could be viewed by others as more trusting.

Trusting between communicators is essential when self-disclosing, especially when the information being revealed is more personal and less superficial. Self-disclosure of personal information can leave the discloser vulnerable. That is why it is important for a reciprocal exchange between the disclosers to take place. Won-Doornink (1979) suggested in a study that, "Perhaps in real-life relationships the initiation of an intimate topic places a greater demand for reciprocation than does a less intimate topic" (p. 240). This study confirmed Altman's (1973) pioneering research about the level of self-disclosure and reciprocity. The importance of reciprocity could probably be best summed up with a statement by Cross and Morris (2003) when they said,

> "…if a person wants to build a harmonious relationship, it is important not only to respond sensitively to one's partner's disclosures but also to remember what has been disclosed and to take this information into account in future interactions. This knowledge allows the individual to predict the partner's behavior and to prevent conflict in the relationship." (p. 513)

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Reciprocal exchange of information is important in building harmony, rapport, trust, and connection in all relationships, especially those who live together and share space, such as college roommates. It is possible that the more reciprocal self-disclosure between roommates, the better the relationship may be. In other words, all the qualities associated with a healthy relationship, such as trust, rapport, respect, and liking may be inextricably tied to the level of self-disclosure between individuals (Collins & Miller, 1994).

Respect and liking for one another was the centerpiece for successful roommates (Kurtz & Sherker, 2003). A more intimate and personal level of roommate communication with each other was related to a more successful relationship (Waldo, 1984). The more liking and respect roommates shared for each other, the more successful their relationship was (Kurtz & Sherker). Rapport among roommates was an important goal for university officials (Carey, Hamilton, & Shanklin, 1986b) because the more cooperative roommates were with one another, the more tolerant they would be in a shared space (Sinha & Mukherjee, 1996).

In addition, sharing a living space with someone can yield obvious challenges, especially if one is experiencing it for the first time, such as a college freshman. Territoriality, or the possessive reaction a person has to a space, can strain a roommate relationship. In a study by Kastenbaum (1984), the more territorial behavior a roommate exhibited, the lower the level of relationship quality. A part of this territoriality also involved marking space with personal belongings. Students who displayed more personal belongings had a lower dropout rate (Hansen & Altman, 1976; Vinsel, Brown, Altman, & Foss, 1980). Kaya and Weber (2003) suggested that future research should examine how

personal belongings and territoriality are related.

Connecting on a social level with others, especially those who are roommates, is vital in order to ward off feelings of loneliness. Loneliness among college students, especially those who are living away from home for the first time, is common. McWhirter (1990) reported that at least 30% of American college students felt lonely. Loneliness is a serious social and psychological problem that has been linked to health problems, anxiety, and suicide (Birtchnell & Alarcon, 1971; Blai, 1989; Crick & Ladd, 1993; Heinrich & Gullone, 2005; Mijuskovic, 1986). Females, especially, tend to suffer more from loneliness when they are not socially connected with others (Lee & Robbins, 2000).

With all of the aspects and challenges of roommate relations, university officials understood that healthy roommate relationships were essential, since a poor relationship with a roommate was shown to lead to lower grades, low student retention, and negative attitudes towards the university (Kuh et al., 2005; Schroeder & Marble, 1994). With that in mind, it goes without saying that focusing on roommate success is a necessary goal for college and university personnel. Workshops in residence halls that focused on roommate communication helped roommates in the overall satisfaction of their relationship (Waldo, 1985, 1989).

While the previously discussed research on cherished possessions, self-disclosure, and roommate relations may appear on the surface to be separate subjects, the synthesis of these areas provided a coherent background for a research problem. The self-disclosure between college roommates about their cherished possessions and the effects it had on rapport, territoriality, and student loneliness was the research study that was

established based on the compilation of the research literature.

Research Questions

In order to fulfill the purpose of the present study, which examined the self-disclosure between college roommates about each other's cherished possessions and its effect on roommate rapport, territoriality, and possessiveness, the following three research questions were developed.

1.   To what degree does self-disclosure about cherished possessions between roommates affect the level of rapport between the two individuals?

2.   To what extent are roommates' feelings of territoriality affected by self-disclosure about each other's cherished possessions?

3.   To what extent are a student's feelings of loneliness affected after self-disclosing information about cherished possessions with her roommate?

Description of Terms

Cherished possession. While several definitions of cherished possessions have been identified in the literature (Curasi et al. 2004; Grayson & Shulman, 2000; Richins, 1994), the researcher of this study compiled several definitions and provided a simple and applicable definition. Thus, the definition used for this study was: Any object that carries special or important meaning to the owner and would thus be considered virtually irreplaceable.

Loneliness. According to Weiss (1987), loneliness has two divisions: intimate loneliness and social loneliness. Intimate loneliness exists when someone does not have close contact with people whom they can share personal experiences. Social loneliness exists when an individual does not have a supportive social system. Both definitions were

used for this study.

Rapport. The definition provided by the developers of the Roommate Rapport Scale was used as the operating definition in this study. The definition was the "quality of [a] relationship characterized by satisfactory communication and mutual understanding" (Carey, Stanley, Werring, & Yarbrough, 1988, p. 175).

Self-disclosure. For the purposes of this study, Burger's (1981) definition was used stating that self-disclosure is "…the act of revealing information about oneself which is not readily available to an outside observer…" (p. 179).

Territoriality. The possessive claim or control an individual has to a particular space (Brown, 1987; Gifford, 1987).

Transitional Objects. These are items, generally used by small children that provide emotional comfort, mainly during difficult moments or stress (Winnicot, 1953).

Significance of the Study

Communication is at the core of successful roommates, so a study about roommate communication was necessary. Specifically, since roommates share space, it was important to understand how personal possessions, especially ones of emotional value, play a role in that space. Since virtually no research had been conducted on roommates' cherished possessions prior to this one, this study that examined the effects of communicating about one's cherished possessions in a shared space could prove to be beneficial.

Results of the study could be useful on several levels. Since very little research had been conducted on college roommates, the research conducted in this particular study could assist in learning more about roommate communication. Knowledge gained about

how roommates got along personally and spatially, may be able to help university officials when handling roommate conflict issues. Such knowledge may also be used to prevent personal and spatial issues from occurring in the first place by implementing exercises to help roommates communicate and understand each other better. Exercises that employ self-disclosure tactics between roommates could also be born to assist in the building of roommate rapport.

In addition to applying the results to the population of college roommates, it is also possible that knowledge gained in this study could help anyone who shares space with another individual. This research could spur other research on house/apartment roommates, spouses, and people who share an office. Since each of these people likely have personal possessions of a cherished nature in those spaces, the research conducted in this particular study could serve as a springboard for other research in these areas.

Since virtually no research had been conducted on the self-disclosure of cherished possessions, the results from this study may also help understand the roles cherished possessions play in the understanding of other individuals. Using cherished possessions as the catalyst for self-disclosure may also have important implications in the fields of consumer studies, communication, sociology, and others. The research conducted in this study was very new territory for both fields of cherished possessions and college roommates, and the application of the results could be numerous. At the very least, the results of this study contribute to the body of research in the fields of self-disclosure, cherished possessions, territoriality of personal space, rapport, loneliness, and roommate relations.

Process to Accomplish

This study on female college freshmen roommates and the self-disclosure that occurred about their cherished possessions was conducted at a large public university in the Midwestern United States. Upon completion of IRB approval and Human Subjects approval from the university where the study occurred, the Director of University Housing was contacted prior to the beginning of the Fall semester about conducting a study of female college freshmen roommates.

Females were chosen over males for this study for several reasons. Firstly, women tend to self-disclose more than men (Dindia & Allen, 1992). In addition, women self-disclose more than men to their same-sex friends (Jourard, 1971). Secondly, as far as cherished possessions are concerned, women generally have more emotional attachment to their special possessions than men (Dittmar, 1989, 1991). These main evidences of support provided the primary reasoning for choosing females, rather than males, as the subjects for this study. Aside from these main reasons, many studies also indicate that female college students report a higher level of loneliness, as opposed to males (Medora & Wooward, 1986; Solano, Batten, & Parish, 1982).

Purposeful sampling of the population was implemented only to roommates who were randomly paired by the university. This sample of roommates was surveyed in order to determine if they had cherished possessions in their dorm room, and they were asked to identify at least one of those possessions. The term, cherished possessions, was defined in the survey. Fifty pairs of roommates was the projected goal for this study. From nearly 400 randomly paired roommates, a total of 21 pairs or roommates actually participated in the study. Participants were assigned through simple random assignment to one of two

groups, an experimental group and a control group. Eleven pairs of roommates were randomly assigned to the experimental group, and 10 pairs of roommates were assigned to the control group. All roommates were unacquainted prior to cohabitation. The study was carried out during the first several weeks of the semester, a time when roommates were new to their living situation and becoming acquainted with one another.

The method employed in this study was an experimental design that utilized a pre- and posttest measure of the dependent variables in research questions one, two, and three for both the experimental and the control group. The independent variable was the self-disclosure session about each other's cherished possessions in the shared living space. Prior to measurement, demographic information on age and ethnicity was gathered for possible use in a future study. Three pre-measure scales were administered to each roommate separately to insure there was no pressure to respond in a certain manner due to the presence of the other roommate. The three pre-measure scales were administered to the participants several days before the self-disclosure interaction. The reasoning behind the several day gap was to avoid potential influence the scales may have had on the self-disclosure session. Participants completed the survey online through Survey Monkey. The survey was administered online to help have a more efficient use of time.

Upon completion of the three scales, the roommates were asked to follow a script for the disclosure of each person's cherished possessions. The genesis of the script originated from interview questions in the seminal study on cherished possessions by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981), but eight additional questions were added in order for the roommates to have a lengthy self-disclosure session. The questions were piloted prior to the actual study. Several professors whom the researcher was acquainted

with reviewed and responded to the script questions. They were chosen for their extensive knowledge and background in the fields of communication and interviewing. There were 12 questions for the script that each person responded to in the self-disclosure session (See Appendix A). The total time of the self-disclosure interaction was limited to 30 minutes. Immediately after the session was completed, roommates in both the experimental and control group were asked to privately retake each of the three scales through Survey Monkey. Laptops were provided by the researcher in order for the participants to complete the surveys immediately and efficiently.

A control group was used to determine if the self-disclosure session had an effect on each of the three research questions and was used to insure internal validity. The control group had to engage in a self-disclosure session about their textbooks. The control group did everything in the same manner that the experimental group did; however, instead of disclosing about their cherished possessions, they self-disclosed about their textbooks. The word, possession, used in the experimental group script was replaced with the word, textbook, in the control group script. Textbooks were used because they represented a neutral object, instead of one that carried emotional or personal value. Textbooks are in a student's possession for a relatively short period of time and will likely have little special meaning to them. Besides the emotionless value of textbooks, they were also used due to the fact that every student would have them in their possession. Textbooks, over other student possessions, were thought to provide the best control.

The self-disclosure sessions occurred privately in a publicly accessible room. After orientation about the self-disclosure sessions in the experimental group and the

control group, the researcher stepped outside the room to limit potential influence. An audio recorder, however, was placed in the room to record the conversation. The participants signed a consent form to allow taping. Each session was reviewed by the researcher in order to assure that the participants followed the script.

As noted previously, the following served as the research questions for this study:

1. To what degree does self-disclosure between roommates about cherished possessions affect the level of rapport with each other?

2. To what extent are a roommate's feelings of territoriality affected by self-disclosure about cherished possessions?

3. To what extent are a student's feelings of loneliness affected after self-disclosing about cherished possessions with her roommate?

To answer question one, The Roommate Rapport Scale (Short Form) developed by Carey, et al. (1988) was administered. Based on the original version by Carey, et al. (1986a), this short form scale included 10 questions. Examples of the questions were: "I feel a sense of satisfaction from talking to my roommate" and "My roommate is open, honest, and genuine with me" (p. 180). The scale has a high degree of reliability as captured by a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .97.

In order to answer question two, Kaya and Weber's (2003) Territorial Behavior Questionnaire was used. This 12 item scale was adapted from Kaplan's (1982) original scale. Sample statements on the form included: "I have a strong need for a clear definition of what is mine and what is my roommate's," "I feel that there is an imaginary, but clear line, which divides the room into my territory and my roommate's territory," and "Some of the articles that I have in my room are things that I really care about" (p.

413). The questionnaire contained two subscales: Firmness of Boundaries Scale and Personalization and Claiming Scale. Cronbach alpha's were .76 and .68, respectively. A small change was made to several of the questions in the Firmness of Boundaries subscale. The word, "would" was placed in several of the questions because it was more relevant to the study. For example, the word, "would" was placed before "lie" in the following item: "My roommate and I lie down on one another's bed." This change was made to determine if there was a change in perception of the other person's territory before and after the self-disclosure session.

Question three was answered using The Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale by Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona (1980). This scale included 20 questions. Sample statements included: "I have a lot in common with the people around me," "There are people who really understand me," "My interests and ideas are not shared by those around me," and "I feel in tune with the people around me" (p. 475). This scale has been widely used, and it was shown to have an alpha coefficient of .94.

After all the measurements were collected from both the experimental and the control groups, the data was analyzed. A 2x2 mixed model ANOVA was used for data analysis, because it allowed the researcher to examine the effects of time, the experimental condition, and the interaction effects. This method of analysis will be used to analyze all three research questions.

Participants experienced minimal or no risk during the study. Participants were asked to sign a consent form before their participation. The consent form included a statement about the use of audio-recording. Knowledge of the participants and their data was only known to the researcher, and demographic information of the participants and

data were kept confidential and in a locked location.

The study was shown to be viable due to the extensive amount of research gathered on cherished possessions, self-disclosure, and roommates. This study was carried out using high ethical standards, and it exposed participants to minimal risk. The research was conducted at a university that uses students as participants for research on a frequent basis.

Summary

The study of cherished possessions extensively reviews what kinds of possessions individuals value, especially possessions of adults. In this body of literature, a primary focus on possessions' relation to identity is strong. Research on cherished possessions has covered numerous other areas, including the homeless and their possessions, disbandment of cherished possessions, and the use of cherished possessions as a way of coping. Within this vast body of research, however, relatively no information exists about the self-disclosure of one's cherished possessions. More notably, no research known has been conducted on female college freshmen roommates self-disclosing about their cherished possessions. With this in mind, it may prove useful to examine the effects that self-disclosing about one's cherished possessions has on female college freshmen roommates as it relates to roommate rapport, territoriality, and loneliness. The research on freshmen roommates in response to the areas of rapport, territoriality, and loneliness is fairly limited; therefore, a study examining the aforementioned intricacies of roommate relations would be justified.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Since this particular study charts a previously undiscovered area of research,

several subject areas needed to be researched and synthesized into a coherent backdrop

for the need of the study. While it may initially appear that the various subject matters

that were researched for the literature review are unrelated, each subject directly applies

to the study at hand. Self-disclosure of one's cherished possessions served as the

independent variable for the study and constituted most of the background literature.

Research on cherished possessions, while diverse and having been conducted over

several decades, is still fairly limited. Self-disclosure, however, has been researched

extensively, especially during the mid-twentieth century. Self-disclosure about one's

cherished possessions, however, is virtually nonexistent. Research on loneliness, as a

general subject, was extensive; however, research on college student loneliness was

rather limited. The same observation could be said for the subject of territoriality. There

seemed to be a paucity of information regarding roommate territoriality, while most of

the research was conducted in other facets of territoriality. Most of the research on

territoriality was conducted in the mid-twentieth century. In addition, research on

roommate rapport appeared to be lacking, as well.

Cherished Possessions

It could easily be argued that, for centuries, humans have owned certain

possessions that were valued beyond their mere utilitarian functions. For a variety of reasons, these items carried unique qualities that spoke to their owners, provided reminiscence, aided in comfort, or assisted in the formation of their identity. Owning items of special significance, without regards to their monetary worth or market value, has been and continues to be a common practice among most individuals. These objects have been identified in the literature with a variety of adjectives, including special, treasured, inalienable, and most prominently, cherished (Cairns, 2001; Chapman, 2006; Dyl & Wapner, 1996; Hill, 1991; Myers, 1985; Richins, 1994; Sherman & Newman, 1977-78; Tobin, 1996; Wapner, et al., 1990)

Despite the long history of humans owning, using, and cherishing material things, little research was conducted on people's possessions prior to the 1970s. Goffman (1961), however, could be attributed to starting the discussion about the meaning of possessions when he determined that possessions of people in institutions like mental facilities take on a significant importance in regards to an individual's identity. While a few noted studies were done in the 1970s (Furby, 1978; Sherman & Newman, 1977-78), the primary study that sparked decades of research was the seminal research by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981).

Their research examined 80 Chicago families and the feelings they had about various objects in their homes. The individuals interviewed attached various meanings to their objects. It was determined that objects were usually valued for either utility (action) or emotion (contemplation). The meanings people attached to their things could be best described by the following figure developed by Dittmar (1991). Possessions generally carried either instrumental or symbolic function, much like the value of action and

contemplation of the objects identified by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981).

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            ┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
            │   Meanings of Material Possessions   │
            └─────────────────────────────────────┘
                 │                         │
                 ▼                         ▼
   ┌──────────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────────┐
   │        Instrumental      │   │         Symbolic         │
   │                          │   │                          │
   │ Direct control over      │   │ Expression of "who"      │
   │ environment,             │   │ somebody is              │
   │ functional uses          │   │                          │
   └──────────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────────┘
          │                          │              │
          ▼                          ▼              ▼
   ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
   │ Use-Related  │◄─│ Self-Expressive  │   │ Categorical  │
   └──────────────┘  └──────────────────┘   └──────────────┘
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| Make possible activity and symbolize activity, give rise to emotional experience and signify that experience. | Symbolize unique aspects, personal qualities, values, attributes, reflect personal history, signify relationships. | Symbolize group membership, social position, status, locate individual in social-material terms |

Figure 1. Meanings of Material Possessions.

  The research by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) provided multiple

findings about the intricacies of owning possessions that ultimately encouraged other

researchers to examine people's cherished possessions. Belk (1983, 1984, 1985, 1988), a

leading researcher of people and their possessions, conducted a series of studies which

examined issues in materialism, the extended self, and identity formation. Belk's

groundbreaking research spawned other researchers to examine the importance

possessions play in people's lives. His extensive research has been cited in many studies

about cherished possessions since the 1980s (Ahuvia, 2005; Baker, Kleine, & Bowen, 2006; Bradford, 2009; Chapman, 2006; Curasi et al., 2004; Dittmar, 1989, 1991; Dyl & Wapner, 1996; Grayson & Shulamn, 2000; Hill, 1992; Kleine, et al., 1995; Kroger & Adair, 2008; Lastovicak & Fernandez, 2005; Lollar, 2010; Myers, 1985; Price, et al., 2000; Richins, 1994; Ruth, Otnes, & Brunel, 1999; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988).

The gender of a person plays a distinctive part in what kind of possessions people cherish. In a study by Wapner, et al. (1990), women were shown to have more cherished possessions than men, even though both men and women do own cherished possessions (Sherman & Newman, 1977-78). Besides mere quantity of cherished possessions, differences in types of possessions and the feelings they invoke in the owner also exist. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) argued that women valued their items for their "contemplation" (emotional) value, and men valued their things for "instrumental" motivation. In addition, personal possessions for men were more self-oriented, and possessions for women were more other-oriented (Dittmar, 1989). Other findings have supported the notion that men valued things that were more self, independent, and activity-oriented, and women valued things that were more other, relationship, and emotion-oriented (Dittmar, 1991, 2004; Kamptner, 1991; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988). Overall, studies appeared to consistently suggest that women have cherished possessions that serve an emotional need, and men tend to be attached to items that are more utilitarian in function.

According to a study by Habermas and Paha (2002), women also used their objects more for reminiscing and less instrumentally. In other words, women found their special possessions to be more important for the memories that were tied to them than

their utilitarian value. Most of these memories were tied to interpersonal relationships, a sentiment that has been echoed in other studies of gender and cherished possessions (Dittmar, 1989; Dyl & Wapner, 1996).

It is important to note that gender lines between what women and men value are not necessarily firmly drawn. Men possess objects that contain emotional functions, and women do value things that are more utilitarian in nature. Even though women tend to value items in a more emotional way, that does not mean that men do not value some items in a similar way. In a study by Baker and Martin (2000), men who cherished baseball cards valued them both for their instrumental value and for their expressive value. Overall, men and women do view their possessions differently, even though some similarities exist.

Attachment to cherished possessions takes place at all ages, as do the types of possessions to which people are attached (Myers, 1985). Hong (1978) conducted extensive research on early childhood (six months to six years, approximately) and special possessions during this time. Myers indicated that blankets, dolls, stuffed toys, etc. were seen as the most cherished items among small children. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) described children's special possessions as being more action-oriented in use. Children between the ages of 8-13 were shown to develop symbolic meanings for their possessions that helped them mark special times and places (Baker, et al., 2006). Gulerce (1991) proposed that the possessions to which children attached themselves, were actually extensions of the self. Children often valued souvenirs because they were symbols of places, people, and events (Baker, et al.). Children who valued souvenirs also used them for contemplation, as well as their communicative properties.

Studies have shown that as children grow into adolescence, the objects that they cherish tend to reflect more independence and autonomy. Myers (1985) discovered that most adolescents valued things like cars, bicycles, and instruments. Expressing one's self is valued in adolescence more than it is in early childhood. Habermas and Paha (2002) and Hormuth (1990) found that college students tended to value items that reminded them of who and what they left behind when they departed for college. The predominant items that college students valued were more symbolic than instrumental. These items included letters, photographs, religious items, jewelry, and stuffed animals.

Numerous studies examined older adults and their cherished possessions (Chapman, 2006; Ekerdt & Sergeant, 2006; Kamptner, 1989; Kroger & Adair, 2008; Price et al., 2000; Shenk, et al., 2004; Sherman & Newman, 1977-78; Sherman, 1991; Tobin, 1996; Wapner et al., 1990). Adults, and especially older adults, used special possessions to create meaning in their lives (Chapman, 2006). As individuals aged, they became increasingly attached to their possessions (Shenk, et al, 2004). Cherished possessions provided adults with an anchor to people, places, and events in their lives. Sherman and Newman; Sherman discovered that late-life adults who had cherished possessions reported having a higher satisfaction with life. Cherished objects can help people in many ways, including the psychological or physical transitional processes that many individuals experience.

Winnicot (1953) has often been credited as being the first person to observe the importance of objects in moments of transition. From what has been researched on transitions, transitioning could likely be inferred to be either psychological or physical. Psychological transitioning would imply moving past difficult life moments. Physical

transitioning would refer to the actual movement from one area to another. A couple examples would be transitioning from a two-parent home into a one-parent home or transitioning from a family home into a nursing residence.

These transitional objects, Winnicot (1953) asserted, particularly helped children during the early stages of life. These special possessions, like blankets and stuffed animals, were important in soothing a child during moments of stress. According to Dyl and Wapner (1996), cherished possessions helped older children and adolescents solve problems and assisted them in times of emotional crisis.

Even homeless children who had to abandon the majority of their cherished possessions still held onto some objects that provided comfort (Hill, 1992). Some of the possessions that homeless children kept provided them with a sense of protection and security against uncertainty. These children also expressed that fear was often caused due to the loss of their cherished possessions. They often reported imagining the occasion in which they would be reunited with their special things.

Despite the research that supports having objects during transitional times, one particular study by Erkolahti and Nyström (2009) suggested that children and adolescents who used transitional objects had more depressive symptoms, but the results were not significant. The majority of the research, however, suggested that using transitional objects is a natural part of the development process, and they serve an important function for individuals during times of stress.

For instance, cherished items have been suggested to assist the elderly in transitioning psychologically from married life to widowhood since such items are deeply rooted in an individual's identity and sense of past (Chapman, 2006). Shenk, et al. (2004)

discovered that widows who remained in their home after the death of their husbands were comforted by the possessions that were still in the home. Despite that their lost spouse's things were still in the home, the items provided happy reminders and not negative ones. Cherished objects held special properties that helped the bereaved cope with his or her loss (Gibson, 2004). According to Gibson, these cherished objects, dubbed melancholy objects, were mainly photographs and clothing. These melancholy objects, through death, took on a symbolic and emotional meaning. The objects provided a link to the person who died. To the bereaved, the death of their partner increased the value of economically worthless possessions to a state of deep meaning and intrinsic worth. Clearly, widows and widowers go through a psychological process of transitioning, and cherished possessions play a major part during this phase. A major reason that adults who had cherished possessions reported coping better was due to the fact that those objects were helpful in processes of transitioning from their home to a nursing facility.

A major focus of the research on cherished possessions and their transitional value rested in older people's transition and adaption to nursing facilities (Kroger & Adair, 2008; Wapner, et al., 1990). The cherished items that older people brought to the nursing home helped bridge the past with the present. Sherman (1991) identified photographs and jewelry as the predominant items that most nursing home residents deemed as cherished. Residents who had cherished possessions adapted better to their new surroundings than residents who did not have cherished possessions (Wapner, et al.). Not only did cherished items provide an anchor to their past identity that made for an easier transition since it was not a total separation from their past life, but cherished objects also helped residents cope during difficult times (Kroger & Adair).

Cherished objects have also assisted individuals in other physical transitions such as moving from one country to another (Mehta & Belk, 1991). These objects not only helped individuals maintain an identity from their homeland, but they also assisted in creating a new identity after they reached their destination. In one particular study, Parkin (1999) suggested that cherished objects took the place of interpersonal relations as a way of storing emotions during a time of hasty and violent dispersal from a particular location.

Most valuable to this particular research were studies that examined students who transitioned from home to college (Habermas & Paha, 2002; Hormuth, 1990; Lochbaum, 2010). As previously noted, Winnicot (1953) asserted that transitional objects helped small children cope during times of stress. Habermas and Paha suggested that the same coping mechanism that was found in cherished objects for young children was also found in the cherished objects of college freshmen. These particular objects helped students in the transition stage of moving from their parents' home to a completely new environment. These mementoes from home assisted in the separation from significant others because they provided the student with a memorable connection to their past. This same connection to the past was seen in the aforementioned studies of the elderly and their transitioning from home to nursing facility. As has been seen with these studies, cherished objects provided a direct connection to their sense of self.

Belk (1988) suggested that a person's possessions extended the self to reflect a person's identity. Belk argued that possessions helped illustrate the map of someone's life. Belk (1990) claimed that possessions played a role in maintaining an individual's history. Cairns (2001) concurred that possessions assisted in defining a person's past,

present and future. Even in a study of homeless women, possessions remained an important component of their past and future identity (Hill, 1991). Women at a homeless shelter kept possessions that maintained a level of symbolism to them. In respect to what was mentioned earlier about the two types of possessions people own, some of the homeless women's possessions held more of a utilitarian value, while others were valued for their symbolism. Clearly, cherished possessions can assist in creating and maintaining an individual's identity. Many other researchers have agreed that a person's identity was defined and maintained through their possessions (Ahuvia, 2005; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Dittmar, 1991; Kleine et al., 1995; Mehta & Belk, 1991; Tian & Belk, 2005; Whitmore, 2001). An individual's sense of self was especially tied to cherished objects (Ahuvia).

A cherished possession's attachment to an individual's identity is not conveyed only when the owner actually has the object. A person's identity is also affected when the person no longer owns the object. Belk (1988) suggested that losing one's possessions contributed to a loss of identity. When that object was no longer part of a person's life, people reported feeling as if a part of them was gone, too. Lollar (2010) concurred with Belk that losing one's possessions in an event such as a fire contributed significantly to a loss of the extended self. Lollar continued by saying that coupled with the trauma of losing one's possessions, guilt for pining over those material objects also occurred.

Losing special possessions is sometimes a deliberate act, however. In a study by Lastovicka and Fernandez (2005) that examined the disposition of meaningful possessions, many respondents reported emotional distress when selling meaningful possessions. Hill (1991) reported that the homeless often reminisced about special

possessions that were lost due to a natural disaster or through the transition from home to shelter. Homeless children reported having dreams of being reunited with the cherished objects that they once possessed (Hill, 1992). Giving away or abandoning cherished possessions can be an extremely emotional process for any individual who values his or her things in an emotional way.

This is especially true for people who have owned cherished items for years and have attached significant meaning to them. Price, et al. (2000) interviewed the elderly about their emotions that they had leading up to the disposition of a cherished possession. The participants viewed their cherished objects as connected with their life review, and their possessions contributed to the creation of their identities. In another study about the disbandment of cherished possessions by the elderly, Ekerdt and Sergeant (2006) discovered that while many mundane objects were among the disbanded household items, possessions with special meaning were given away with more thought and consideration. The giver in these circumstances highly valued this process, and he or she put forth significant contemplation on who received the cherished possession and why.

Giving away assets is very much a ritualistic process (Bradford, 2009). When to give a particular cherished possession, and to whom, can be very challenging for the giver (Tobin, 1996). Oftentimes, the giver wanted to be sure that his or her inalienable wealth was cared for by those who received the cherished item (Curasi, et al., 2004). It is clear that releasing cherished possessions is a significant process for many individuals. A person's identity is embedded into such things, and letting go of special items is akin to letting go of a part of a person's self.

Studies on gift-giving, even if the item given was not cherished, revealed that a

person's identity was at the heart of the process (Kleine, et al., 1995; Kompter, 2001; Maschio, 1998). According to Maschio, when objects were exchanged, individuals involved in that process became associated with that object exchanged. In other words, a person's identity became attached to that gift. This imprint served as a memory of that person and that exchanging ceremony. A gift that symbolized the relationship between giver and receiver provided an opportunity to continue the relationship of the giver's spirit and the receiver (Mauss, 1954). Gifts also provided recipients reminders of shared experiences, and such gifts were thought to assist in future shared experiences (Ruth, et al., 1999). Kleine et al. asserted that in order for gifts to have had attachment value, they had to reflect the receiver's identity. Possessions that mirrored an individual's identity helped in the formation of his or her life story.

Once an item is disbanded to another person, as is the case with family heirlooms, maintaining the possession's special meaning can be challenging. Curasi, et al. (2004) indicated that cherished possessions, once passed to another generation of owners, continued their sacred status. Such objects helped preserve a group's identity and provided a link to the past. In a study by Lastovicka and Fernandez (2005), sellers of cherished possessions reported feeling more comfortable parting with items to buyers who had a shared self, or a common identity. While there was no guarantee that the possession would retain the private meaning that it held for the seller, "a legacy is more likely with a buyer who exhibits a shared self" (Lastovicka & Fernandez, p. 819).

A part of conveying a person's identity is through the stories that cherished possessions tell about an individual's life. Kleine, et al. (1995) suggested that possessions were especially useful in telling stories about the self. In other words, possessions help

create a narrative of one's life. They are "artifacts of the self" (Kleine, et al. p. 341).

Ahuvia (2005) further noted that cherished possessions "serve as indexical mementos of key events or relationships in the life narrative, help resolve identity conflicts, and tend to be tightly embedded in a rich symbolic network of associations" (p. 179). Since cherished possessions are seen to be connected to a person's identity, it would stand to reason that sharing stories about such possessions may assist in the understanding of one's self and others. Atkinson (2002) said that stories that were told to others provided meaning and connected people in society.

The social aspect of telling stories about the intrinsic value of cherished possessions has been seen as an important part of the disbandment process, (Ekerdt & Sergeant, 2006; Dant, 1999; Lastovicka & Fernandez, 2005; Pratt & Fiese, 2004). Disbandment is the process that many people go through when they have to give away some or all of their possessions. Accompanying stories with such a transfer helps the giver obtain closure. In a way, giving away cherished items that have been a part of an individual's life for years is a process of mourning. Since it is widely accepted that revealing one's feelings during a period of grief is beneficial and therapeutic, it would make sense that telling stories about an object that contains great emotional attachment value would be helpful, as well. Parker and Wampler (2006) discovered that storytelling reduced negative emotions in a patient. Stories were seen to have great therapeutic value, in that storytelling elicited emotional change in a patient.

Stories have given people an opportunity to heal (East, et al., 2010; Freeman, 1991; Lesho & Block, 2005), assisted in mental and physical health (Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999), reduced stress and anxiety (Crogan, Evans, & Bendel, 2008), and have

helped people cope therapeutically (Bergner, 2007; East, et al.; Freeman, 1991; Parker & Wampler, 2006). Telling stories also helps in a therapeutic manner by building trust and respect among the senders and receivers (Errante, 2000; Sandelowski, 1994). Most notably was a study by Cairns (2001) who studied female counseling patients. The participants' artifacts carried deep meaning and reminded them of events, people, and places in their lives. Cherished possessions helped define their past, present, and future. These objects also assisted many of the women during difficult periods in their lives. Discussing these objects provided women with a means to discuss various aspects of their lives. Wapner, et al., (1990) suggested that cherished possessions could be used in counseling groups since special objects have been known to help during difficult times and transitions. Overall, communicating to others on a personal and emotional level has been seen as a positive way to connect with others and learn about one's self. Clearly, there are psychological benefits to telling stories.

Telling stories about one's life and self-disclosing information about oneself is virtually the same process. Both actions are directly related to communicating with others. Telling stories and self-disclosing allows others who are receiving the content to learn more about the person who is revealing the information. Self-disclosure is essentially telling stories about oneself.

Self-disclosure

The study of self-disclosure has a relatively long history, dating back to the 1950s when Jourard and Lasakow (1958) were some of the first researchers who studied self-disclosure and its effects. Since that time, self-disclosure has been a topic of discussion in many disciplines, especially sociology, psychology, and communication (Collins &

Miller, 1994). According to Berg and Derlega (1987), theory and research on self-disclosure has focused on several areas: personality, counseling, and relationships. Relating to the area of relationships, a dominant area of focus has been on self-disclosure and liking (Collins & Miller). Dindia and Allen (1992) remarked that the examination of gender differences as it relates to self-disclosure has been a major topic of interest, as well. The research on self-disclosure is rather extensive, and because of this fact, the review of the literature on self-disclosure will be narrowed to topics that are primarily concerned with the subject of this particular study: college female roommate self-disclosure about their cherished possessions. The review of the literature in this instance examined self-disclosure as it related to relationships, reciprocity, liking, and psychological and practical benefits, especially for roommates.

Since gender is the primary demographic of this particular research on female college roommates, it is important to examine the differences between men and women as they relate to self-disclosure. Numerous studies have examined the gender differences of self-disclosure (Alloy, Schuldt, & Bonge, 1985; Dindia & Allen, 1992; Mulcahy, 1973; Reis, Senchak, & Solomon, 1985; Shaffer & Ogden, 1986; Stokes, Fuehrer, & Childs, 1980). For the most part, research has revealed that women generally self-disclose more than men (Dindia & Allen; Jourard, 1961; Jourard & Lasakow, 1958; Jourard & Richman, 1963; Mulcahy, 1973; Reis, et al.; Shaffer & Ogden, 1986). One of the reasons that women may self-disclose more than men is that there is a greater societal pressure and expectation that women reveal information more than men, especially intimate disclosures (Collins & Miller, 1994; Franzoi & Davis, 1985). Cline and Musolf (1985) and Stokes, et al. (1980) asserted that the primary difference in gender and

intimate self-disclosure was that men were more willing than women to disclose to strangers and acquaintances, while women were more willing than men to disclose to intimates.

Women also tended to self-disclose more intimate things with a same-sex friend than men did (Mulcahy, 1973; Rubin & Shenker, 1978; Shaffer & Ogden, 1986). Archer (1979) and Lombardo & Berzonsky (1979) found that intimate disclosers tended to be women. According to Rubin and Shenker, women were more "social-emotional" and men were more "task-oriented" in their disclosures. In other words, female friendships tended to focus more on intimacy and confidence-sharing, and male friendships disclosed more task and autonomy-related items.

Reis and Shaver (1988) suggested that there are two main types of disclosures when getting to know another person: emotional disclosures and factual disclosures. Emotional disclosures are ones that reveal private opinions and feelings (e.g., "I am worried that nobody cares about me"). Factual disclosures are ones that reveal personal facts (e.g., "My family and I have not spoken for two years"). Self-disclosure on an emotional level, rather than a factual level, was a better predictor of intimacy (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998).

Revealing intimate information about oneself generally does not happen initially. Friendship is highly related to the level of intimate self-disclosures (Rubin & Shenker, 1978). Altman and Taylor (1973) believed that self-disclosure was vital to the formation of close relationships. Altman and Taylor's theory of social-penetration illustrated that the breadth and depth revealing subject matter increases over time. When two people first meet, they usually discuss relatively few topics and usually at a superficial level. As

individuals become more acquainted with one another, the amount and depth of those topics increases. When people become more comfortable with one another, a wide variety of topics are discussed, and disclosure is usually at a high intimacy level.

Reis and Shaver (1988) developed a model of intimacy which articulates that intimacy is developed through a process in which one person self-discloses personal information to another individual, the receiver responds, and then the original sender evaluates the response as validating. In other words, self-disclosure helps in the development of relationships (Newcomb, 1961). Collins and Miller (1994) said that communication between two individuals increased the level of closeness in the relationship.

A common denominator of the self-disclosure process is reciprocal exchange of information. Reciprocity of self-disclosure has been studied in depth (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Cozby, 1972; Ehrlich & Graeven, 1971; McAllister & Bregman, 1985; Shaffer & Tomarelli, 1989; Won-Doornink, 1979). Altman and Taylor argued that reciprocity is vital in the beginning of a relationship because it builds trust between the communicators. Receiving information from another person through self-disclosure was seen as rewarding because it implied trust (Worthy, Gary, & Kahn, 1969). This level of trust allows the relationship to develop further. People who disclosed more intimate information were viewed by others as more trusting (Ajzen, 1977).

Building trust in a relationship is essential, especially when communicators are disclosing more personal information. According to Won-Doornink (1978), intimate disclosures between individuals yielded the highest level of reciprocity in established relationships. This finding is in contrast to findings by some researchers (Cozby, 1973;

McAllister & Bregman, 1985); however, these particular studies used contrived

relationships rather than established relationships. Overall, when personal information

was revealed and reciprocated, trust, closeness, and liking of the other person was

increased (Collins & Miller, 1994). This sentiment could be best summarized by Cross

and Morris (2003) when they articulated,

> …if a person wants to build a harmonious relationship, it is important not only to
> respond sensitively to one's partner's disclosures but also to remember what has
> been disclosed and to take this information into account in future interactions.
> This knowledge allows the individual to predict the partner's behavior and to
> prevent conflict in the relationship. (p. 513)

The effects that self-disclosure has on the liking of another person have also been

heavily studied (Berg & Archer, 1980; Burger, 1981; Collins & Miller, 1994; Cozby,

1972; Gelman & McGinley, 1978; Kohen, 1975; McAllister, 1980; McAllister &

Bregman, 1983; Worthy, et al., 1969). Through an extensive meta-analytic review about

self-disclosure and liking by Collins and Miller, they concluded that the liking of other

people led individuals to self-disclose more. In addition, they discovered that when

people were more intimate in their self-disclosure, it led that person to have greater liking

for the person who received that disclosure. Despite the research that suggested intimate

self-disclosure and increased liking were related, a study by Cozby (1972) inferred that

the relationship between liking and self-disclosure was curvilinear. In other words,

someone who disclosed highly intimate information aroused anxiety in the other person.

The information from this study, however, was gathered through participants responding

in hypothetical situations. Overall, the research suggests that when individuals self-

disclose through the aforementioned process of social-penetration, liking between the participants is increased.

Liking is vital for survival of any relationship. This is especially true for college roommates. Kurtz and Sherker (2003) determined that liking was the centerpiece for successful roommates. Kurtz and Sherker discovered that the more roommates liked each other, the more successful their relationship was. Waldo (1984) reported that roommates who had higher levels of communication, had a more positive view of the quality of their roommate relationship. In addition, Waldo discovered that students who communicated more with their roommates also experienced lower levels of depression and alcohol abuse.

With respect to social penetration theory, Hays (1985) discovered that like other relationships, roommates first self-disclosed fairly superficial information about themselves. As the relationship grew, roommates were likely to reveal more intimate information (Berg, 1984). Rubin and Shenker's (1978) study on roommates and their self-disclosures revealed that not only was friendship and self-disclosure positively related, but female roommates had more intimate disclosures than male roommates. This finding was consistent with previously mentioned studies about same-sex self-disclosure (Mulcahy, 1973; Shaffer & Ogden, 1986). Waldo and Fuhriman (1981) discovered that roommates who had high levels of trust and intimacy were more satisfied with each other's relationship, and they were more adjusted to their living situation. Communicating is tantamount in building a harmonious, trusting, and rapport-filled relationship with any individual, and it is especially important for those who share living space, such as college roommates.

Roommate Rapport

According to the Digest of Education (2008), approximately 15% of

undergraduates, the majority of them who were freshmen, lived in on-campus housing.

Most of them were females. Because these young people are transitioning from a known

environment into one that is new and unknown, it is not uncommon for freshmen to

become stressed, especially when they must live with people they have never met before.

Many students have never experienced sharing a bedroom or a bathroom before

(McCorkle & Mason, 2009). McCorkle and Mason also noted that the changing aspects

of the twenty-first century bring many challenges to campus life. Freshmen classes have

become increasingly more multi-cultural, which creates an environment that is filled with

different values, customs, and expectations. Having a successful roommate relationship is

not only important to the students, but it is also a primary goal for college and university

personnel. Roommate rapport is especially important for university officials (Carey,

Hamilton, & Shanklin, 1986b).

Roommate rapport is a fairly general concept. In respect to this particular study,

the definition by Carey, et al. (1988) provided the template on which to judge rapport.

Rapport is indicated by positive communication and mutual understanding between

roommates. In other words, when roommates are successful and getting along positively

in their relationship, they would be considered to have a healthy level of rapport. Through

examination of several of the scale items in the Roommate Rapport Scale (Short Form)

that was developed by Carey, et al., one can understand what rapport actually

encompasses. The scale items included topics on roommate confidence, desire to help,

satisfaction in communicating, openness, honesty, and comfortableness with the

roommate.

Roommate success has been viewed as a fundamental interest for college and university officials (Hill, 2004). University personnel were convinced that healthy roommate relationships were important, because dysfunctional roommate relationships led to low grades, low student retention, and negative attitudes towards the school (Kuh, et al., 2005; Pace, 1970; Schroeder & Marble, 1994). Alternatively, good roommate relationships have also been associated with good physical health and psychological well-being (Cross & Morris, 2003; Joiner, Vohs, & Schmidt, 2000; Snydersmith & Cacioppo, 1992; Waldo & Fuhriman, 1981; Waldo, 1984).

An obvious deterrent to rapport is conflict. Conflict is likely to occur with any couple, especially a couple who share a living space, such as college roommates. Conflicts between roommates can arise due to a multitude of issues. Curley (2003) noted that resolving conflicts is one of the top predictors of overall satisfaction in college housing. Conflict between roommates was a significant cause of student stress (Dusselier, Dunn, Wang, Shelley, & Whalen, 2005). In regards to gender, female college freshmen have been reported to suffer from more stress than men (Megel, Wade, Hawkins, & Norton, 1994). It appears that female roommates also have more troubles than male roommates. According to a study by Emerson (2008), 61% of the roommate trouble cases involved female roommates versus 35% of male roommate cases. The remaining 4% involved troubles with mixed-gender roommates. McCorkle and Mason (2009) concurred that females were more likely than males to report experiencing problems with their roommates. Despite findings that have suggested females experienced more conflict than male roommates, some encouraging studies have found that females received more social

support than males (Fleming, Perkins, Lovejoy, & Collins, 1991; Lovejoy, Perkins, Collins, 1995). This may be due to the aforementioned research that women tend to self-disclose more than men. It might be inferred that since women self-disclose more than men (Dindia & Allen, 1992; Jourard, 1961; Jourard & Lasakow, 1958; Jourard & Richman, 1963; Mulcahy, 1973; Reis, Senchak, & Solomon; Shaffer & Ogden, 1986), they may be able to obtain more support for problems that they are experiencing.

Unlike other kinds of roommates, freshmen college roommates do not always get the option of choosing who they want to live with. Because of this, roommates are often mere acquaintances at first. Stern, Powers, Dhaene, Dix, and Shegog (2007) determined that roommates who chose to live together were more satisfied, cooperated, and liked their roommates more than roommates who were paired randomly by university housing officials. This finding is especially important to the current research study, as the roommates used in this study were randomly paired by the university. Roommates who were randomly paired by the university and were dissimilar to each other reported having lower levels of relationship satisfaction (Carli, Ganley, & Pierce-Otay, 1991). These same roommates also reported that they were less likely to live together the following year. Finding similarities in any relationship is important to its overall maintenance, especially for roommates who are more or less forced to cohabitate.

Students who perceived themselves as being similar to their roommates had a greater sense of affinity and attraction towards their roommates (Carli, et al., 1991). Affinity to the other person was also increased when roommates spent more time communicating with one another (Deutsch, Sullivan, Sage, & Basile, 1991). The more willing roommates were to communicate with each other, the more satisfied they were

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with their relationship (Martin & Anderson, 1995). Martin and Anderson's study also suggested that the more similar the roommates were in their communication traits, the better their relationship was. Stern, et al. (2007) remarked that "people prefer similar others because they tend to substantiate each other's personal attitudes and beliefs" (p. 54). According to Saidla (1990), roommates who understand each other better have more trusting and closer relationships. Hawken, Duran, and Kelly (1991) determined the importance that communication plays in roommate relationships when they contended that appropriate levels of self-disclosure between roommates leads to better roommate rapport.

Improving communication between roommates is obviously a primary concern for university officials. Duran and Zakahi (1988) recommended that universities should evaluate the communication abilities of students in order to prevent or correct problems. They also suggested that workshops focusing on improving communication between roommates may be useful. Waldo (1985) suggested that the communication skills that students learn in residence halls may help their future relationships. Saidla (1990) purported that understanding one's roommate has an impact on roommate rapport. Saidla also suggested that communication training that will increase the level of understanding between roommates may have a positive effect on the relationship. Allred and Graff (1980) discovered that training in communication skills was effective in helping roommates self-disclose feelings more freely. Allred and Graff's study was particularly noteworthy since it involved female dyads. Workshops developed by Waldo (1989) also helped roommates improve the level of their communication.

The overall findings that positive and similar communication between roommates

increases roommate rapport and satisfaction (Carli, et al., 1991; Deutsch, et al., 1991; Hawken, et al., 1991; Martin & Anderson, 1995; Saidla, 1990) gave legitimacy to this particular research study. Additionally, the research indicated that women experience roommate troubles more than men (Emerson, 2008), thus giving additional credence to this particular line of research. Although research on college roommates and their self-disclosures about their cherished possessions has not been previously studied, the research on programs and workshops that encourage roommate disclosures suggest that learning about and understanding each other assists in increasing roommate rapport and relationship satisfaction (Allred & Graff, 1980; Saidla; Waldo 1985, 1989). Learning about each other's cherished possessions that they have in their residence may have an effect on roommate rapport. In addition, the knowledge gained about each other's cherished possessions may have an impact on territoriality issues of roommates.

<div align="center">Territoriality</div>

Research on territoriality originally began in the studies of animals, specifically birds (Howard, 1920), and deer (Darling, 1937). These studies primarily examined the acquisition, marking, and defense of a particular area. Carpenter (1958) suggested that all throughout the animal kingdom, territoriality exists. Hediger (1950) researched animals in captivity and determined that the primary components of territoriality were defense and personalization. Ardey (1961, 1966) contended that a strong relationship between animal and human territoriality existed. Human territoriality went virtually unstudied until the 1960s. It was not until popular studies by Ardey and a few other studies (Altman & Haythorn, 1967; Barton, 1966; Colman, 1968; Lyman & Scott, 1967; Sommer & Becker, 1969) that territoriality in humans gained some attention. By the middle of the

1970s, still relatively little empirical research had been conducted on human territoriality (Edney, 1974). For the most part, research on territoriality has remained fairly stagnant.

It is important to distinguish the differences between territoriality and personal space. Briefly, personal space is the area that surrounds an individual. According to Becker (1973), "personal space has no specific topographical reference and cannot be recognized by the presence of some objective event, such as a marker" (p. 439). Territoriality, on the other hand, refers to an actual place and the marking and defense of such a place. Territoriality is "the possessive reaction to an area or to particular objects" (DeVito, 2004, p. 201). Altman (1970) also contended that territoriality included possessive behavior towards objects in addition to space.

According to Altman (1975), three types of territories exist: public, secondary, and primary territories. Briefly, public territories are those that are accessible to all individuals, like a mall or restaurant. Secondary territories are not owned by a person, but they are often associated with an individual. Examples include a table someone always sits at, or an individual's neighborhood. Primary territories are the ones that are most noteworthy to the research study at hand. Primary territories are areas that are specifically owned by someone, like a person's room, bed, desk, etc.

Similar to animals, humans mark their primary territories. Hediger (1950) noted that like animals, humans, before they can claim and defend a territory, they must first mark it in some manner. Clearly there are differences in the way animals and humans mark their particular territories, even though humans have retained some animalistic instincts when defending their territories (Evans & Howard, 1973). Sommer (1966) asserts that since human communication primarily relies on symbols, the defense of one's

territory is indicated by things like fences and personal possessions rather than physical aggression.

According to Goffman (1971) there exist three types of markers: central, boundary, and ear markers. Central markers are used to reserve a place, like putting a jacket on the back of a chair. Boundary markers separate a person's territory from another's, like a fence or a taped line dividing a room in half. Ear markers are those that signify ownership of a particular thing or space, such as a monogram or a nameplate.

Markers, especially boundary markers, define and remind others what belongs to a person and his or her neighbor, and they also articulate who that person is and what it means to be a neighbor in society (Sommer & Becker, 1969). The markers people use are respected by others and also serve other important functions as indicated in a study by Becker (1973):

> The sanctity with which markers were respected and the strong desire to avoid confrontation and hassles with other persons suggests that one of the most important functions markers serve is to reduce or eliminate hostility by creating an effective warning device system. (p. 444)

The placement of personal possessions appears to protect certain areas from invasion by others (Becker; Sommer & Becker).

Hansen and Altman (1976) discovered that personalizing rooms was an immediate and universal process for college students. According to DeVito (2004), markers are also important in giving a person a sense of belonging. In addition, DeVito argued that items that are displayed in a room or the way a person decorates a room communicates certain things about that individual. Personal territory can reveal a

person's tastes, personality, and values. For example, college freshmen who had moved out of their parent's house into a residence hall now had an opportunity to "impose their own values on the environment" (Hansen & Altman, p. 493).

Edney (1975) suggested that when individuals acknowledged that certain places belonged to them, it reduced the chance of conflict. This is especially true for people who live in close proximity to one another like college roommates. Rohner (1974) found that the more space and visual privacy students had in their residence room, the less interpersonal stress there was between roommates. Rohner's study suggested that because of this, there was lower roommate turnover.

Typically, female students personalized rooms more than male students (Kaya & Weber, 2003). Personalizing rooms was a way for women to reveal information about themselves. While Kaya and Weber's study did not specifically say this, it might be inferred that this nonverbal display of items was a way of self-disclosing about themselves, a practice that tends to be used more by women than men (Dindia & Allen, 1992; Jourard, 1961; Jourard & Lasakow, 1958; Jourard & Richman, 1963; Mulcahy, 1973; Reis, et al., 1985; Shaffer & Ogden, 1986).

Some empirical research has shown that marking one's territory or decorating with personal possessions has some positive effects, especially among college roommates. College students who marked their territory with personal possessions had a lower attrition rate than those students who did not display personal items (Hansen & Altman, 1976; Marsh, 1988; Vinsel, et al., 1980). Additionally, Kaplan (1982) suggested that personalizing areas was related to a means of coping. Despite the aforementioned research on personal possessions and territoriality, relatively few studies have been

conducted. Kaya and Weber (2003) suggested that future research should examine

additional relations between personal belongings and territoriality.

Sharing a living space with someone can be challenging for anyone, especially for

individuals who may have never shared a room before. Many college freshmen have such

an experience. Freshmen who did share their room prior to moving to college learned that

establishing territorial boundaries made for a better sharing experience (Kaplan, 1982).

Kaya and Weber (2003) discovered that, regardless of gender, roommates who knew each

other prior to cohabitation shared their personal belongings and other aspects of their

room more than roommates who did not know each other prior to living together. Kaya

and Weber suggested that knowing one's roommate appeared to be a determining factor

in territorial behavior in the residence room. This finding is especially important since the

roommates surveyed for the research study at hand were paired randomly and were not

familiar with each other prior to moving into the residence hall.

Territoriality can put a significant strain on a roommate relationship. Sinha and

Mukherjee (1996) found that when roommates were more cooperative with each other,

they were more tolerant in their living space. Kastenbaum (1984) argued that the more

territorial behavior a roommate exhibited, the lower the relationship quality. The

roommate relationship in Kastenbaum's study was measured throughout the semester,

and the relationship remained poor throughout the entire semester.

A person's territoriality was also related to their gender and personality (Mercer

& Benjamin, 1980). In a study conducted by Mercer and Benjamin about territorial

behavior in residence halls, men were found to be more territorial than women. Male

roommates, regardless of how acquainted they were with each other, had firmer

boundaries than did female roommates (Kaya & Weber, 2003). Essentially, men displayed more non-sharing behavior than women.

Despite an adequate amount of research on human territoriality, the examination of territoriality among college roommates is relatively sparse. While there have been some helpful studies on roommates and territoriality (Kaplan, 1982; Kastenbaum, 1984; Kaya & Weber, 2003; Mercer & Benjamin, 1980; Sinha & Mukherjee, 1996), more need to be conducted. Research conducted about college roommates and their personal markers (Hansen & Altman, 1976; Marsh, 1988; Vinsel, et al., 1980) has also shed light on the importance that possessions play in sharing a living space. The summation of these studies has paved a path for additional research to be conducted. Specifically, no studies have examined the effects of talking about personal objects that are in primary territory. Research on this particular subject may not only cast insight into issues concerning roommate territoriality, but it may also have a bearing on rapport between college freshmen roommates and the loneliness that many new students face when entering college.

<div align="center">Loneliness</div>

Loneliness is an extremely vast subject area, and according to McWhirter (1990), everyone experiences some kind of loneliness at some point in their lives. From the wealth of literature on loneliness, one could argue that multiple definitions of loneliness exist. Peplau and Perlman (1982) said that loneliness is a state when a person feels a discrepancy between the interpersonal relationships that they want to have and the ones that they actually have. According to Rook and Peplau (1982), people experience different kinds of loneliness. For example, some individuals experience loneliness in

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certain situations, and others feel chronically lonely. Other researchers like Sadler (1978) have gone so far as to suggest that there are five dimensions of loneliness: psychological loneliness (being out of touch with the self), interpersonal loneliness (being separate from others), social loneliness (being ostracized from a group), cultural loneliness (feeling separate from one's own culture), and cosmic loneliness (feeling alienated from God). According to Weiss (1987), loneliness has two primary dimensions: intimate loneliness and social loneliness. Intimate loneliness occurs when one feels that they do not have close contact with others whom they can share personal or intimate experiences. Social loneliness happens when a person feels that they do not have a supportive social network. From what has been gathered in the review of literature, intimate and social loneliness were seen as the primary dimensions of loneliness, and were thus used for the purposes of this study.

Within every definition of loneliness, one thing appears to be clear: loneliness is a serious problem. According to a review of the literature by Heinrich and Gullone (2006), adolescents are the most prone to loneliness. One of the reasons that this may occur is that even though there is an increased level of responsibility and separation from parents, adolescents are still seeking affiliation and are thus more vulnerable to emotional and social loneliness (Brennan, 1982).

Loneliness can be temporary or it can be persistent (Young, 1982). After conducting an extensive literature review on the health consequences of loneliness, Blai (1989) concluded that when loneliness was persistent, it could be detrimental to a person's mental health. The effects that loneliness has on an adolescent's physical health was also evident in that those who were lonely exercised less, smoked, and consumed

alcohol more (Mahon, Yarcheski, & Yarcheski, 2001). Depression, anxiety, and suicide risk can all be effects of loneliness (Birtchnell & Alarcon, 1971; Henrich & Gullone, 2005; McWhirter, 1990; Mijuskovic, 1986). Multiple studies have determined that significant links between depression and loneliness exist in adolescents (Jackson & Cochran, 1991; Koenig, Isaacs, & Schwartz, 1994; Mahon, et al.; Moore & Schultz, 1983). Solano and Koester (1989) found that anxiety about social communication was associated with loneliness. Lonely college students were more likely to experience anxiety in interpersonal situations, and they regarded themselves as undesirable to others (Wilbert & Rupert, 1986). In addition, people who were lonely tended to have lower life satisfaction (Schultz & Moore, 1988).

Most college freshmen are still technically adolescents who are 17-19 years old. Transitioning to college for adolescents is often a stressful process because they are leaving behind familiar surroundings, family, and friends. It is difficult for many young people to transition from high school to college (Rotenberg & Morrison, 1993). According to a study conducted by Spitzberg and Canary (1985), lonely people may have been in a transitional state. New college students who were concerned about losing old friends due to their transition, tended to experience friendsickness (Paul & Brier, 2001). Those who experienced friendsickness were also lonelier.

The first year of college is generally the most difficult adjustment period that a student encounters (Giddan, 1988). Since loneliness often occurs because of a lack of an emotional connection with relationships, it is not uncommon for students to feel lonely when they leave home for college. According to a survey that asked freshmen what their biggest surprise was when they entered college, the difficulty of making friends was

ranked high (McCorkle & Mason, 2009). This is especially true for students who do not even know their roommate prior to cohabitation. Although most college freshmen make an adjustment to college by the end of their first year, a significant amount of students do not (Cutrona, 1982).

The majority of loneliness research has examined college students (Schultz & Moore, 1988). According to McWhirter (1990), 30% of college students have reported that the loneliness they experienced was a problem. When students, like most people, feel that they are lacking in social relationships, it is not uncommon for loneliness to set in. With respect to Weiss's (1987) aforementioned definition of loneliness, college students often suffer from intimate and social loneliness (Vaux, 1988). College freshmen reported that loneliness is highly related to the lack of a social network (Damsteegt, 1992). Not being part of a group can cause a student to feel lonely and alienated. Baker and Siryk (1980) discovered that with freshmen, students who felt alienated were more likely to temporarily or permanently leave college. Rotenberg and Morrison (1993) also found that students who self-reported being lonely had a higher likelihood that they would drop out of college.

Many other consequences of loneliness exist for college students. Boredom, restlessness, unhappiness, and dissatisfaction with relationships were other consequences of loneliness for students (Russell, Peplau, & Ferguson, 1978). Cutrona (1982) discovered that dissatisfaction with friends was the largest predictor of loneliness for college students. As far as depression among students was concerned, college students who were lonely at the beginning of the semester were also depressed later in the semester (Rich & Scovel, 1987).

With relation to loneliness and gender, the research appears to be inconclusive. Koenig, et al. (1994) suggested that adolescent boys are lonelier than girls. In addition, some research has shown that when the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, et al., 1980) was used, men scored higher on loneliness than women (Borys & Perlman, 1985; Schultz & Moore, 1986). However, in both of these studies by Borys and Perlman and Schultz and Moore, women were more likely to admit their loneliness than men, perhaps due to the negative stigma loneliness has for men. Other studies have suggested that women experience loneliness more than men (Medora & Woodward, 1986; Lau & Gruen, 1992; McWhirter, 1997; Schultz & Moore; Weiss, 1973). Medora and Woodward suggested that one of the reasons why females scored higher on loneliness scales may be due to the fact that women were more in touch with their feelings and accepted loneliness easier than males.

There appears to be a major difference between men and women as to the attribution of loneliness. Men may feel lonelier when they place too much emphasis on their independence (Hoglund & Collison, 1989). Being connected socially was a high indicator of loneliness for females but not for males (Lee & Robbins, 2000). When women failed to meet the expectations of social and intimate connections with others, both social and intimate loneliness occurred (McWhirter, 1997). These findings, however, were inconsistent with other research that suggested men felt lonelier when they lacked social support (Cutrona, 1982; Chen & Chung, 2007).

Multiple studies on the effects that self-disclosure has on a person's loneliness have been conducted. According to Zakahi and Duran (1985), "there is a strong intuitive relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure" (p. 57). Specifically, differences in

gender and loneliness were related to self-disclosure levels. Female college students'

loneliness was significantly related to the amount of self-disclosure to same-sex and

opposite-sex friends (Solano, Batten, & Parish, 1982). In other words, women, more than

men, experienced more feelings of loneliness when they perceived a lack of disclosure to

friends of the same sex than disclosure to opposite-sex friends. Berg and Peplau (1982)

found similar results; however, no relation between loneliness and self-disclosure to

opposite-sex friends were found. The less intimate the disclosures were, the more the

individuals reported feeling lonely. Chelune, Sultan, and Williams (1980) found that for

females, loneliness was significantly tied to an unwillingness to self-disclose in

hypothetical situations.

 Loneliness has been seen as a serious problem, especially for people who are in a

state of transition, like new college freshmen. The effects of loneliness can be serious,

whether they are related to a person's health, well-being, or academic career. Despite

conflicting research on whether women are lonelier than men, it appeared that the relation

between self-disclosure and loneliness was greater for women than it was for men (Berg

& Peplau, 1982; Chelune, et al., 1980; Solano, et al., 1982). These findings, coupled with

research which has determined that females self-disclose more intimate information to

same-sex friends (Mulcahy, et al., 1973; Shaffer & Ogden, 1986), are particularly

beneficial to this current study on female college freshmen roommates and the effects

their disclosures about cherished possessions has on loneliness.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

 As has been seen, the research on two seemingly unrelated and separate topics,

cherished possessions and self-disclosure, has been fairly diverse. Despite this wealth of

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research, virtually no studies have been conducted on the self-disclosure about a person's cherished possessions. The positive effects of owning cherished possessions have been seen in multiple studies (Chapman, 2006; Dyl & Wapner, 1996; Kroger & Adair, 2008; Mehta & Belk, 1991; Sherman & Newman, 1977-8, 1991; Wapner, et al., 1990), along with the positive effects of self-disclosing to another person (Ajzen, 1977; Collins & Miller, 1994; Cross & Morris, 2003). Bridging these two topics together is necessary, if nothing other than for the contributing to the sheer paucity of information on the subject.

Determining the effects of self-disclosing about a person's cherished possessions could be endless; however, limitations as to what should be specifically studied must be set. Since females were likely to self-disclose more intimate information (Dindia & Allen, 1992; Jourard, 1961; Jourard & Lasakow, 1958; Jourard & Richman, 1963; Mulcahy, 1973; Reis, et al., 1985; Shaffer & Ogden, 1986) and they tended to have more cherished possessions than males (Wapner, et al., 1990), it seemed appropriate to use females as the population for the current study. Female college freshmen, specifically, were also chosen due to the fact that they were more apt to experience more problems and conflicts than male roommates (Emerson, 2008; McCorkle & Mason, 2009). Even though men tended to display more territorial behavior than women, females were chosen as the population because the research on this area was fairly sparse. In addition, females personalized their residence rooms more than males (Kaya & Weber, 2003), and thus the objects displayed may serve as nonverbal markers that reveal information about the individual. Lastly, since females who self-disclosed were less likely to experience loneliness (Berg & Peplau, 1982; Chelune, et al., 1980; Solano, et al., 1982), it seemed that female roommates were an appropriate choice for the population. Women also

reported being lonelier than men in several studies (Lau & Gruen, 1992; McWhirter, 1997; Medora & Woodward, 1986; Schultz & Moore, 1986; Weiss, 1987).

These aforementioned reasons, along with other findings listed in the review of the literature, were used as the basis for studying college freshmen, roommate rapport, territoriality, and loneliness. In addition, university officials spend a great amount of time working with students to have a pleasant experience with their roommates. Having more information about college freshmen roommates (especially roommates who were previously unacquainted prior to cohabitation) could prove to be beneficial for university personnel.

Up until now, no researcher has studied the effects of self-disclosing about a person's cherished possessions, much less the specific effects related to roommate rapport, territoriality, and loneliness. Although the effects of self-disclosure have been studied in relation to roommate rapport, territoriality, and loneliness, a person's cherished possessions have never been used as the catalyst for self-disclosing. On the surface, these subjects may seem unrelated to each other, but the synthesis of cherished possessions and self-disclosure may yield insights into how roommates get along, issues of territoriality, and feelings of loneliness. In addition, the combination of self-disclosure and cherished possessions may lay the groundwork for future research to be conducted.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

An extensive literature review has yielded much research on cherished

possessions. The majority of this research has focused on cherished possessions as they

relate to a person's identity (Ahuvia, 2005; Belk, 1988; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-

Halton, 1981), transitional moments (Dyl & Wapner, 1996; Erkolahti & Nyström, 2009;),

and coping (Kroger & Adair, 2008; Winnicot, 1953). Missing from this mass of research

are studies about what happens when people self-disclose to other people about their

cherished possessions. While self-disclosure has been a topic that has been widely

studied for decades (Berg & Derlega, 1987; Jourard & Lasakow, 1958), there have been

no studies that have examined the effects of talking about one's cherished items.

Moreover, there has been no research about the communication of cherished

possessions of those who share a living space, such as roommates. Roommates,

particularly previously unacquainted roommates, have many issues to work through when

sharing a space. This is especially true if they have moved out of an environment in

which they were rather dependent on someone else, such as a family home. Working

through issues of getting along with a relative stranger, negotiating territorial space, and

coping with loneliness are especially important for individuals in such a situation. For

this study, it was determined that the best population to study would be female freshmen

college roommates who were previously unacquainted prior to cohabitation.

To explore these various arenas, three research questions were developed:

1. To what degree does self-disclosure about cherished possessions between roommates affect the level of rapport between the two individuals?

2. To what extent are roommates' feelings of territoriality affected by self-disclosure about each other's cherished possessions?

3. To what extent are a student's feelings of loneliness affected after self-disclosing information about cherished possessions with her roommate?

Research Design

This study was designed to examine what effects existed after female freshmen college roommates, who were unacquainted prior to cohabitation, self-disclosed about their cherished possessions. The three dependent variables in the study were indicated in the three research questions: roommate rapport (Question 1), territoriality (Question 2), and loneliness (Question 3). Each dependent variable was measured through an experimental research design. Participants were randomly assigned to either a control or an experimental group. This study utilized a between-subjects design with an experimental group and a control group; however, each participant in both groups was subjected to the same pre-tests and post-tests, making it a within-subjects design as well.

This method was chosen because it was believed to be the best approach in examining if self-disclosure about cherished possessions had an impact on daily college roommate factors like rapport, territoriality, and loneliness. An experimental design allowed the researcher to determine if self-disclosure about cherished possessions, alone, was the independent variable that affected the three aforementioned dependent variables. Such a design helped answer questions about the between-subjects variables and the

within-subjects variables.

To test Question 1 about roommate rapport, participants in both the control and experiment groups took a pre-test survey on Survey Monkey during the first week of the Fall semester. Participants returned the following week and participated in a self-disclosure session. The participants who were assigned to the experimental group engaged in a self-disclosure session about each other's cherished possessions that they had in their campus residence. Participants in the control group self-disclosed about their textbooks, which, unlike cherished possessions, were non-emotional or personal objects. Upon completion of the self-disclosure session, each participant was administered a post-test survey via Survey Monkey. This was the same survey that participants took the week prior. Question 2 and Question 3 were answered using the exact same method as Question 1. In other words, all three research questions were tested in one pre-test session, one self-disclosure session between the roommates, and one post-test session that immediately followed the self-disclosure interaction.

Population

Female college freshmen from a large Midwestern university were chosen as the particular demographic for this study. Only roommates who were previously unacquainted were targeted as potential participants. The university paired roommates using one of three methods. In the first method, students could submit a mutual request. This method allowed students who already knew each other to share a room. In the second method, students could use a software system that is similar to Facebook to self-select a roommate. A mutual request was then submitted. Finally, students could be randomly paired after they completed a roommate questionnaire. The latter provided the

best opportunity for students to have the least amount of prior knowledge about their roommate before the Fall semester began.

A list of the random roommate pairings that included students' names, e-mail addresses and residence hall information was provided by the Director of University Housing. This list included a total of 405 students, or approximately 202 pairs of roommates, which served as the population of female freshmen who were unacquainted prior to cohabitation. An e-mail was sent several days before the Fall Semester started to all 405 students. The e-mail introduced the researcher and asked for their participation in a research study about cherished possessions. Students had a choice to come with their roommate one of two nights to sign up for the study. The sign-up events were held in one of the residence halls on campus in a private, but publicly accessible room. On the evening of the recruitment for participants, signs were placed in the residence hall reminding students about the roommate research study. An incentive of serving pizza and soda during the sign-up, along with a raffle to win a $100 gift card to a clothing store of their choice, served as incentives to encourage participation.

Response rate was low. A total of 68 students showed up to participate in the study. Eighteen students had to be turned away because they were not randomly paired roommates. These particular students attended because they saw signs about the research study and free pizza in the lobby of the residence hall. Eight of the students who signed up for the research study never returned for the self-disclosure session and posttest, despite repeated e-mail reminders. A total of 42 students served as the final number of participants in this study. This was 10.37% of the total population invited, a relatively small sample. Each pair of roommates was randomly assigned to either a control group or

an experimental group.

Demographic information relating to age and ethnicity was collected upon completion of the posttest. All participants were female, as this was a directly controlled variable in the study. Of the 42 total participants, 26 (61.9%) participants identified themselves as white or Caucasian, 13 (30.9%) identified themselves as black or African-American, one (2.4%) participant was Hispanic, and two (4.8%) participants classified themselves as other. Even though all participants were incoming college freshmen, not every participant was 18 years of age. Thirty-seven (88.1%) of the participants were 18 years old, three (7.1%) were 19 years old, and two (4.8%) were 17 years old. A detailed summary of the demographics can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Information

Variable	Control Group		Experimental Group	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Age	18.1	0.44	17.95	0.21
Variable	n	%	n	%
Race				
Caucasian	10.0	50.0	16.0	72.7
African-American	7.0	35.0	6.0	27.2
Hispanic	1.0	5.0	0.0	0.0
Other	2.0	10.0	0.0	0.0

Data Collection

All data for this study was gathered from female freshmen college roommates at a large Midwestern university. All participants were unacquainted prior to cohabitation. Data collection took place during the first two weeks of the Fall semester.

Prior to data collection, IRB approval was obtained and the Director of University Housing was contacted for a potential study on college freshmen. The director approved the study and provided the researcher with a list of the incoming female freshmen who were randomly paired. In addition, the director assisted in reserving publicly accessible rooms in the residence halls for the researcher to conduct the study. Groundwork for the study took place in the three months prior to the data collection.

Several days before the semester began, an e-mail was sent to all female freshmen roommates who were randomly paired, asking them to participate in a study about cherished possessions. A description of what was meant by a cherished possession was included in the e-mail. The e-mail also instructed that in order to participate in the study, both roommates needed to consent and come to the research study together. The e-mail relayed that the study would not require a lot of their time, and times and location to participate in the study were included. It was also conveyed that all personal data and demographic information collected would remain strictly confidential. Due to the many competing collegiate activities during this time and to help recruit participants, the previously stated incentives were offered.

Two recruitment nights were held during the first week of the semester. When students came into the room for the research study, they were checked against the master list of the randomly paired roommates to ensure consistency. Next, each set of

roommates were verbally told by the researcher about the nature of the study. If they agreed to the study, they were given a consent form to read and sign. The researcher also verbally explained the consent form to make sure the participants fully understood and felt comfortable. Upon completion of the consent form, they were asked to go to a computer that the researcher provided and complete three online surveys through Survey Monkey. The computers were set up in different parts of the room so the participants felt private and non-pressured. After each pair of roommates completed the surveys, they signed up for a date and time the following week to complete the study. Roommates had a choice to come one of four days between 4:00pm and 9:00pm. An e-mail reminder was sent to each roommate prior to the appointment.

Each roommate pair was randomly assigned to a control group or an experimental group. They were assigned an identification number for anonymous coding. For example, a pair in the control group and experiment group may have been assigned C1 and C2 and X1 and X2, respectively. When the roommates arrived for the second part of the research study, they were asked to engage in a self-disclosure session. Depending on which group they were randomly assigned to, they either discussed their cherished possessions (experimental group) or their textbooks (control group). Textbooks were chosen as the control variable because they were objects that students had in their possession; however, they did not contain an emotional or sentimental value that cherished possessions had.

Each pair of roommates followed a script of 12 questions (Appendix A). Four of the 12 questions originated from the seminal work of Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981). Eight more questions were added to provide more depth and meaning to the interview since four questions were not enough for an appropriate self-disclosure

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session. The questions between the control group and the experimental group were exactly the same; however, the word textbooks in the control group script was replaced for "cherished possessions" in the experimental group script. The script was piloted prior to the self-disclosure session by several professors of communication studies who were very knowledgeable about self-disclosure dynamics.

Each pair of roommates was asked to complete the self-disclosure session in a private conference room. While they were instructed that they had up to 30 minutes to complete the session, most participants finished the session in 15 minutes or less. The self-disclosure session was audio recorded to make sure the participants followed the script. All participants did follow the script as intended.

Upon completion of the self-disclosure session, the roommate pair was asked to go to a provided computer and take three surveys via Survey Monkey. Each roommate took the surveys physically away from the other roommate to encourage privacy. After each participant completed the surveys, she was thanked for her time and participation. Every participant in the study followed exactly the same procedures. No irregularities in the data collection process occurred.

The three survey tools that were used were The Roommate Rapport Scale (Short Form) developed by Carey, et al. (1988), Kaya and Weber's (2003) Territorial Behavior Questionnaire, and The Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale by Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona (1980). The Roommate Rapport Scale (Short Form) was chosen for its high reliability (Cronbach alpha .97) and the pertinent questions it asked. Examples of the questions were: "I feel a sense of satisfaction from talking to my roommate" and "My roommate is open, honest, and genuine with me." The Territorial Behavior Questionnaire was chosen

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because it is one of the only scales of its kind that measured feelings of territoriality, particularly roommate territoriality. Some of the statements in the survey included: "I have a strong need for a clear definition of what is mine and what is my roommate's," "I feel that there is an imaginary, but clear line, which divides the room into my territory and my roommate's territory," and "Some of the articles that I have in my room are things that I really care about." The questionnaire contained two subscales: Firmness of Boundaries Scale and Personalization and Claiming Scale. Cronbach alpha's were .76 and .68, respectively. The Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale was chosen due to its high reliability (Cronbach alpha .94), its immense popularity as a loneliness measurement tool, and its applicability to the kind of loneliness that incoming freshmen often experience. Sample statements included: "I have a lot in common with the people around me," "There are people who really understand me," and "I feel in tune with the people around me."

Analytical Methods

Descriptive and nonparametric statistics were used to answer each of the three research questions. Each variable of roommate rapport, territoriality, and loneliness was analyzed using the same statistical method due to the fact that each variable in the research questions was administered in the same fashion by using a pre-test and post-test survey. In other words, every participant took a pre- and posttest of the Roommate Rapport scale (Short Form), the Territorial Behavior Questionnaire; and the Revised UCLA Loneliness scale.

Each research question had a within-subjects factor. These were the pre- and posttests used for each research question. Every participant, whether in the control group

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or the experiment group, was subjected to these pre- and posttest surveys. Since there was a control group and an experiment group, a between-subjects comparison needed to be made in order to determine if a difference between these two groups existed. Because of these factors, a 2×2 mixed factorial ANOVA was used. A mixed factorial ANOVA examines the effects of the within-subjects variables and the between-subjects variables (Salkind, 2008). This statistical method allowed analysis of two independent variables (self-disclosure about cherished possessions and self-disclosure about textbooks) and the two levels of each variable (pre- and posttest). Each of the three research questions were answered using the same statistical method of a 2×2 mixed factorial ANOVA through SPSS software.

Limitations

Every research study has certain limitations. Due to the complex method used in this particular study, several limitations arose. These limitations can be categorized in several areas: sample size, competing campus and residence hall events, time constraints, time of the self-disclosure session, and other miscellaneous factors.

Sample Size

The sample size was very small. A total of 21 pairs of roommates participated in the study. While this is approximately 10% of the total population of female freshmen who were randomly assigned to their roommate, it was too small to obtain results that could be generalized to a broader population of female freshmen college roommates. In addition, while this study purposefully examined the directly controlled variable of female freshmen, not examining male freshmen also limits the study.

Competing Campus and Residence Hall Events

Obtaining participants was extremely challenging due to several pressures of competing campus and residence hall events. Because of this challenge, the sample size was small. Students, especially incoming freshmen have many obligations, orientations, and adjustments they need to account for during the first week or two of the Fall semester. For instance, several campus and residence hall events were competing for freshmen attention while this study was being conducted. Even though an incentive of free pizza and a $100 gift card raffle was being offered, most students seemed to choose other events.

Time Constraints

This particular study needed to examine roommates who were previously unacquainted prior to living together. Because of this factor, time was of the essence to administer three pre-tests, conduct a self-disclosure session, and administer three post-tests before the roommates had sufficient time to become more acquainted and closer with one another. The primary premise of this study was to see what effects self-disclosure about cherished possessions, alone, had on roommate rapport, territoriality, and loneliness. If the study was conducted several weeks or a month into the semester, the point of the study would be moot because they would have had a significant amount of time to get to know each other and adjust to college life. This is why the study needed to be conducted during the first two weeks of the Fall semester, a time when roommates are still getting to know each other and acclimating to life at college. This small window of time made the challenge of getting participants that much more difficult.

Another limitation was the time between the pre- and posttest. Even though it was

only one week between the pre-test and the self-disclosure session and posttest, it may have been enough of a variable for the roommates to get to know each other better.

Time of the Self-Disclosure Session

Even though 12 detailed questions were provided for both roommates to answer during the self-disclosure session, the amount of time it took the participants to answer the questions was faster than expected. A time limit of 30 minutes was set, yet every roommate pair went through the script of questions in 15 minutes or less. This could be seen as a limitation due to the short amount of self-disclosure time and could have had an effect on the overall results of the study. Interfering during or after the self-disclosure session to encourage more discussion between the participants was not an option because such an act would have threatened the validity of the study.

Other Miscellaneous Factors

Several other miscellaneous factors could be seen as limitations in this study. For example, one limitation was that many students did not look at their new school e-mail inbox. All incoming freshmen are provided with school e-mail addresses; however, many students reported that they never checked their new e-mail. Because this was the only method of contact provided to the researcher from the Director of University Housing, contacting all prospective participants was severely limited.

Another possible limitation could have been that an invitation to participate in a research study may have discouraged students from participating. For instance, one particular student who wanted to participate told the researcher that her parents did not want her participating in a research study. It is possible that a research study carries with it the perception for new college freshmen (and their parents) that obtrusive methods of

observation or manipulation would occur if they participated.

Finally, it is also possible that since all participants had cherished possessions, they may have a different way of getting along, coping with loneliness, and dealing with territoriality issues than individuals who do not have cherished possessions. Studies looking into this notion are certainly needed.

Summary

This study utilized a between-subjects and within-subjects experimental design that was conducted at a large Midwestern university. Female freshmen roommates who were previously unacquainted prior to cohabitation were chosen as the targeted demographic for this study. Despite some limitations, this study yielded some findings that could be of benefit to understanding the role that self-disclosure about one's cherished possessions has in matters of roommate rapport, territoriality, and loneliness.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This study was conducted to determine what effects existed when female

freshmen college roommates self-disclosed information about a cherished possession

they brought with them to college. Roommates in this study were previously

unacquainted prior to cohabitation and were sampled at a large Midwestern university

during the first two weeks of the Fall 2011 semester.

Research on cherished possessions has been quite extensive; however, no studies

have been conducted on the impact that self-disclosure has on individuals when they talk

about their cherished items. In addition, no research has been conducted on the role that

roommate rapport, territoriality, and loneliness play when someone self-discloses

information about their cherished possessions. For these reasons, this study was

conducted, and the following research questions were asked:

1.   To what degree does self-disclosure about cherished possessions between

roommates affect the level of rapport between the two individuals?

2.   To what extent are roommates' feelings of territoriality affected by self-disclosure

about each other's cherished possessions?

3.   To what extent are a student's feelings of loneliness affected after self-disclosing

information about cherished possessions with her roommate?

This study consisted of a between-subjects design with an experimental group and a control group. Participants in each group were administered the same pre-tests and post-tests, making it a within-subjects design as well. The study was implemented in two primary phases.

In the first phase, roommates who had cherished possessions took three independent pre-tests about roommate rapport, territoriality, and loneliness. At this time, roommates were assigned to either the experimental group or the control group. In the second phase, roommates met a week later to engage in a self-disclosure session about their cherished possessions (experimental group) or their textbooks (control group). Upon completion of the self-disclosure session, the roommates were asked to take three post-tests about roommate rapport, territoriality, and loneliness. These tests were identical to the pre-tests to determine if the self-disclosure session had any effects on roommate rapport, territoriality, and loneliness.

All three research questions were answered using a 2×2 mixed factorial ANOVA due to the fact that this study utilized both between-subjects variables and within-subjects variables. This chapter reviewed the research questions, discussed the findings and analysis of results, and cited implications and recommendations for future research.

Findings

Roommate Rapport

In order to determine the degree to which self-disclosure between roommates about cherished possessions affected their level of rapport, participants of both the experimental and control group were surveyed using the Roommate Rapport Scale (Short Form). The scale consisted of 10 questions that were answered on a 5-point Likert scale

that ranged from Never to Always. The reliability of the test in this study proved high with a Cronbach Alpha of .970. Because a within-subjects factor of a Roommate Rapport pre-test and post-test was used among all participants, but a between-subjects comparison of the control and experimental groups was also used, a 2 × 2 mixed factorial ANOVA was conducted.

The results did not show a significant test interaction $F(1, 40) = .106, p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .003$ (see Figure 2). Group 1 indicates the control group and Group 2 indicates the experimental group.
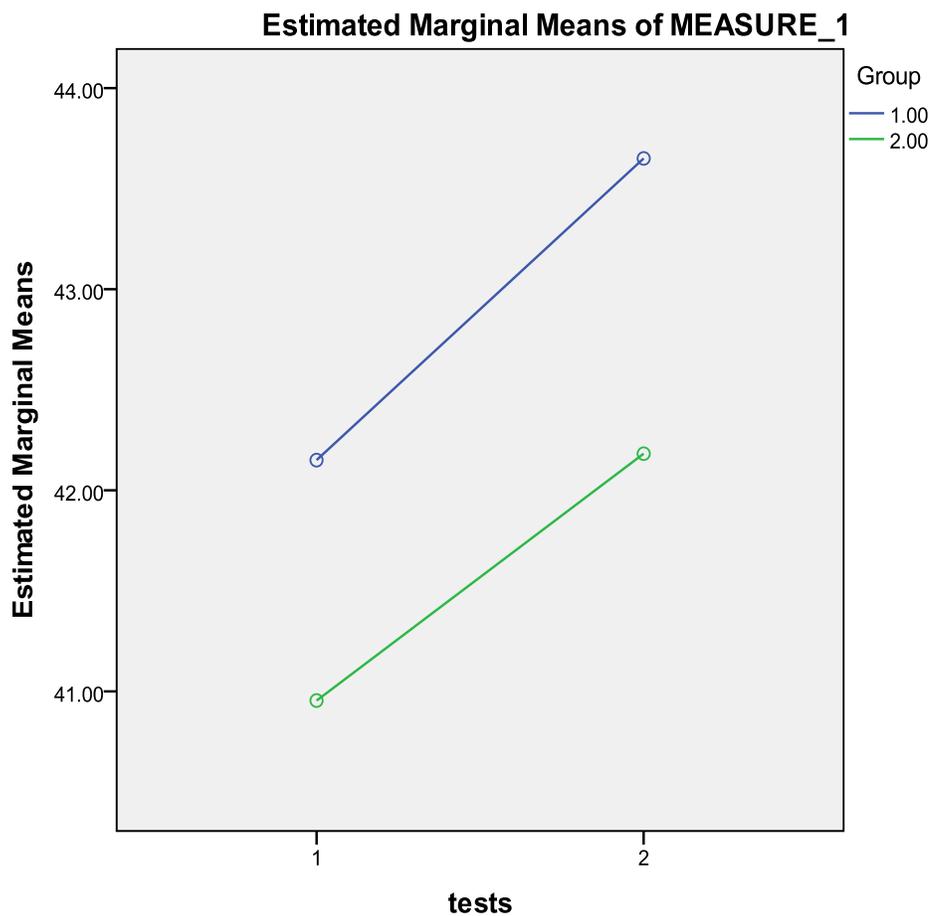

Figure 2. Roommate Rapport Test Interaction.

No significant main effect was shown between the control group (self-disclosure about textbooks) and the experiment group (self-disclosure about cherished possessions), $F(1, 40) = .305$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .008$. There was, however, a significant main effect between the pre-tests ($M = 41.52$, $SD = 8.16$) and the post-tests ($M = 42.88$, $SD = 7.52$), $F(1, 40) = 10.643$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .210$. Means and standard deviations for the Roommate Rapport Scale by condition are reported in Table 2.

Table 2

Pre- and Posttest Means and Standard Deviations for the Roommate Rapport Scale

Time	Control		Experiment	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Pre-Test	42.15	7.71	40.95	8.70
Posttest	43.65	6.71	42.18	8.29

Territoriality

To answer the research question concerning the effects self-disclosure about cherished possessions had on territoriality issues, all participants were surveyed using the Territorial Behavior Questionnaire. This survey consisted of two subscales: Firmness of Boundaries Scale that consisted of seven questions and Personalization and Claiming Scale that included five questions. The questions on the Firmness of Boundaries subscale referred to an individual's willingness to share things or parts of their room. A person

who had a high degree of firmness exhibited more non-sharing behaviors. Questions on the Personalization and Claiming subscale referred to how a person saw the decorations and items in their room as a way of self-expression. People who exhibit high personalization and claiming behaviors tend to have stronger territorial claims (Kaplan, 1982). Depending on the style of question in both subscales, the answers ranged on a 7-point Likert scale from either Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree or Never to Very Often. The reliability of both these subscales in this study proved to be high with a Cronbach alpha of .894 and .811, respectively. A 2 × 2 mixed factorial ANOVA was conducted for both of the subscales.

Territoriality – Firmness of Boundaries

The results did not show a significant test interaction $F (1, 40) = .165, p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .004$ (see Figure 3). Group 1 indicates the control group and Group 2 indicates the experimental group.
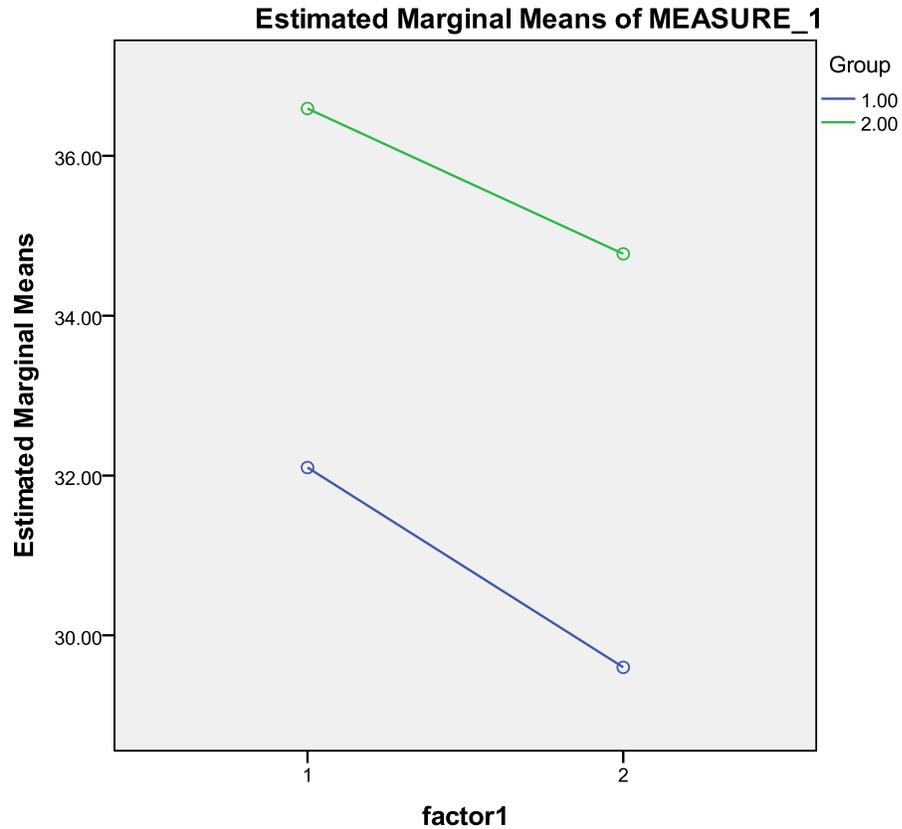
Estimated Marginal Means of MEASURE_1

Figure 3. Territoriality—Firmness of Boundaries Test Interaction.

No significant main effect was shown between the control group (self-disclosure about textbooks) and the experiment group (self-disclosure about cherished possessions), F (1, 40) = 3.85, $p > .05$, partial η^2 = .088. There was, however, a significant main effect between the pre-tests ($M = 34.45$, $SD = 7.68$) and the post-tests ($M = 32.31$, $SD = 9.55$), F (1, 40) = 6.62, $p < .05$, partial η^2 = .142. Means and standard deviations by condition are reported in Table 3 for the Territorial Behavior Questionnaire's Firmness of Boundaries subscale.

Table 3

Pre- and Posttest Means and Standard Deviations for Firmness of Boundaries

	Control		Experiment	
Time	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Pre-Test	32.10	8.66	36.59	6.10
Posttest	29.60	11.35	34.77	6.94

Territoriality – Personalization and Claiming

The results did not show a significant test interaction $F (1, 40) = .141, p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .012$ (see Figure 4). Group 1 indicates the control group and Group 2 indicates the experimental group.
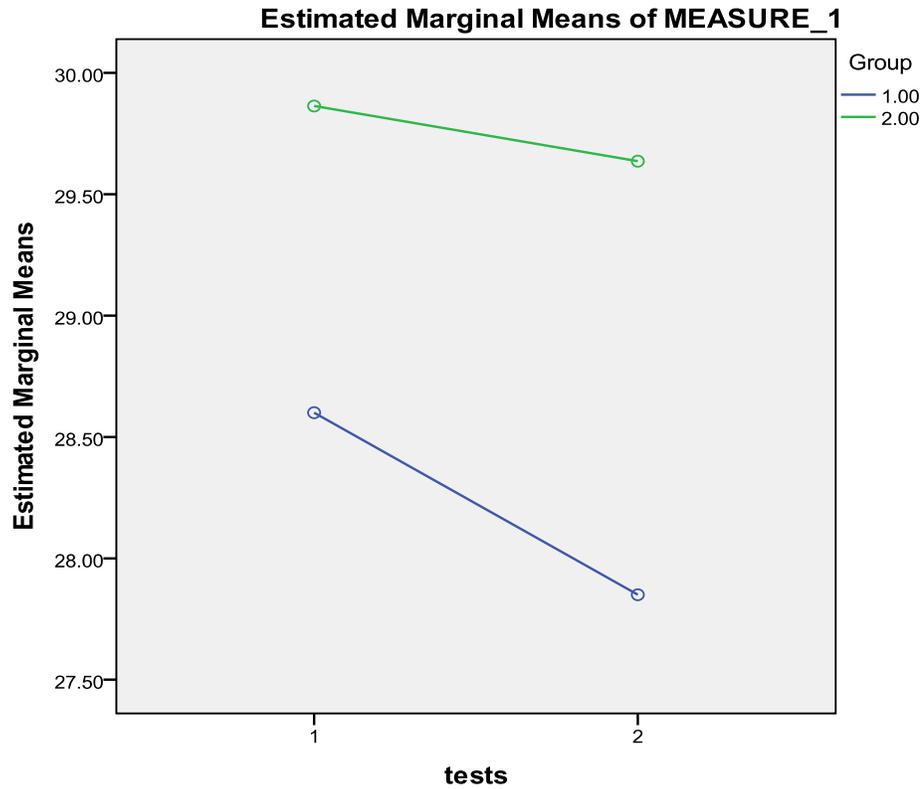
Figure 4. Territoriality—Personalization and Claiming Test Interaction.

No significant main effect was shown between the control group (self-disclosure about textbooks) and the experiment group (self-disclosure about cherished possessions), $F (1, 40) = .927$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .023$. In addition, there was no significant main effect between the pre- and the posttests $F (1, 40) = .494$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .012$. Means and standard deviations for the Personalization and Claiming subscale by condition are reported in Table 4.

Table 4

Pre-test and Post-test Means and Standard Deviations for Personalization and Claiming

	Control		Experiment	
Time	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Pre-Test	28.60	5.94	29.86	4.21
Posttest	27.85	7.26	29.64	4.68

Loneliness

Participants of both the experimental and control groups were surveyed using the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale to determine what effects self-disclosure about cherished possessions had on loneliness. The scale consisted of 20 questions that were answered on a 4-point Likert scale that ranged from Never to Often. The reliability of this scale in this study proved to be high with a Cronbach alpha of .952. A 2 × 2 mixed factorial ANOVA was also conducted for this scale.

The results did not show a significant test interaction F (1, 40) = .616, $p > .05$, partial η^2 = .015 (see Figure 5). Group 1 indicates the control group and Group 2 indicates the experimental group.
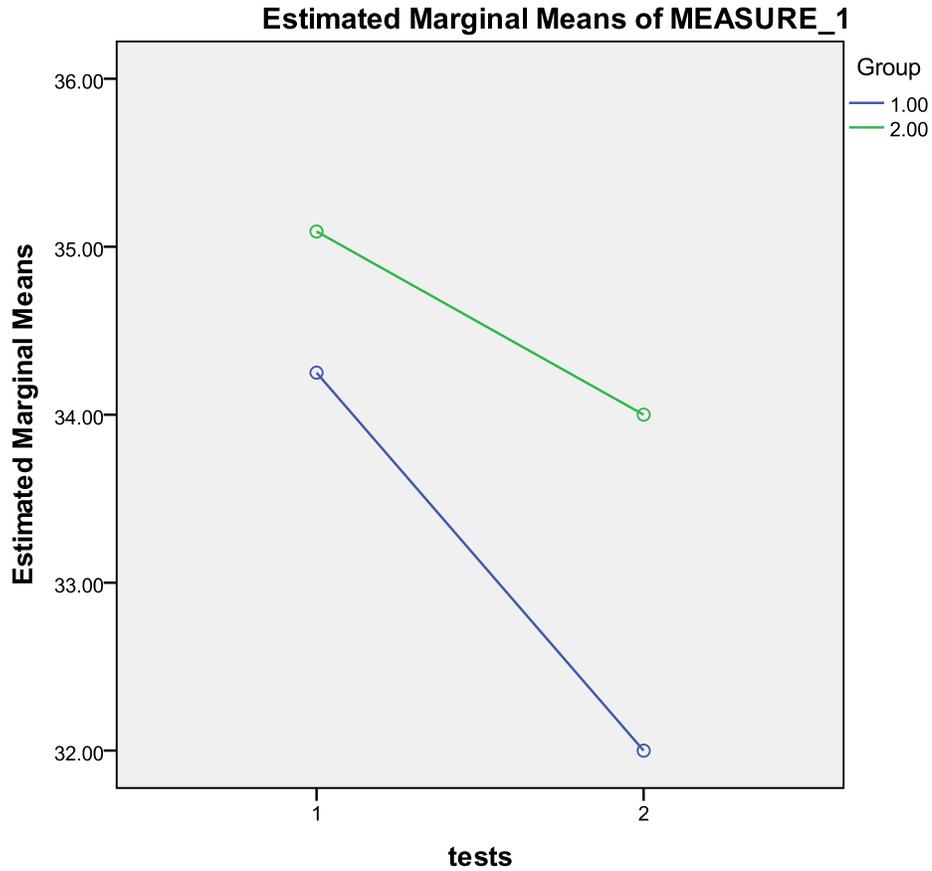
Figure 4.4 Loneliness Test Interaction

No significant main effect was shown between the control group (self-disclosure about textbooks) and the experiment group (self-disclosure about cherished possessions), $F (1, 40) = .174, p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .004$. There was, however, a significant main effect between the pre-tests ($M = 34.69, SD = 11.23$) and the posttests ($M = 33.05, SD = 11.09$), $F (1, 40) = 5.12, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .113$. Means and standard deviations for the Roommate Rapport Scale by condition are reported in Table 5.

Table 5

Pre- and Posttest Means and Standard Deviations for the UCLA Loneliness Scale

Time	Control		Experiment	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Pre-Test	34.25	11.82	35.09	10.93
Posttest	32.00	10.95	34.00	11.38

Conclusions

The analysis of the results from the Roommate Rapport Scale (Short Form), the two subscales of the Territoriality Questionnaire, and the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale yielded several conclusions.

Roommate Rapport

A number of conclusions could be drawn from the results concerning the affects that self-disclosure about cherished possessions had on the rapport of female freshmen college roommates. The results indicated that there was not a main effect for topic (textbooks and cherished possessions), which indicates that the groups were in and of themselves not significantly different. In other words, the groups were not different to begin with. There was no significance in the interaction of the two independent variables of textbooks or cherished possessions. In other words, neither the subject matter of textbooks or cherished possessions, as part of the self-disclosure session, changed the

level of roommate rapport. Although the topic in and of itself did not lead to an increase in rapport, there was, however, a significant result in the passage of time from when they took the pre-tests to when they completed the post-tests. Roommates in both the control and experimental groups had an overall higher level of rapport with each other after a week had passed between the tests.

This higher level of rapport over time could be due to two factors. First, self-disclosure, whether it was about textbooks or cherished possessions, could have been enough to increase levels of rapport between the roommates. Bonding over the discussion of a common topic may have increased rapport. Second, the fact that a week between the pre-test and the post-test had passed, giving the roommates more time to get to know one another, could have accounted for the increased rapport levels.

Territoriality – Firmness of Boundaries

The conclusions regarding the Firmness of Boundaries were similar to the conclusions drawn from Roommate Rapport. The results indicated that there was not a main effect for the topics of textbooks and cherished possessions, which suggests that the groups were in and of themselves not significantly different in terms of their views of boundaries. There was no significance in the interaction of the two independent variables of textbooks or cherished possessions. In other words, neither the subject matter of textbooks or cherished possessions, as part of the self-disclosure session, changed the participants' firmness of boundaries. Although self-disclosing about the topic, in and of itself, did not lead to a decrease in the firmness of boundaries, there was, however, a significant result in the passage of time. This suggests that roommates in both the control and experimental groups were not as firm in their territorial boundaries after completing

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the self-disclosure session and the post-tests. In other words, roommates were not as firm in their boundaries from the time they took the pre-tests to when they completed the post-tests.

It appears from the results that the firmness of boundaries in a shared space diminishes over time. A possible reason for this is that since a week passed between the pre-tests and the post-tests, roommates became better acquainted and addressed boundary issues in their residence and engaged in more sharing behaviors. However, the position that the self-disclosure sessions, regardless of topic, helped diminish firmness of boundaries cannot be ignored as it applies to further research studies.

Territoriality – Personalization and Claiming

As far as the Personalization and Claiming subscale of the Territoriality Questionnaire is concerned, no significance on any level was found. The groups were in and of themselves not significantly different. In addition, since there was no interaction effect, indicating that self-disclosure about cherished possessions or textbooks did not make a difference in the act of personalizing or claiming areas of space that was shared by roommates (their residence). A short passage of time also did not make a significant difference in personalizing or claiming areas in their residence. It is unclear as to whether a longer period of time would make a significant difference in this facet of territoriality. Further study might add valuable information in this area.

Loneliness

The results regarding a student's feelings of loneliness during her first couple of weeks at college indicated that there was not a main effect for the topics of textbooks and cherished possessions. This suggests that the groups were in and of themselves not

significantly different. There was no significance in the interaction of the two independent variables of textbooks or cherished possessions. Although the topic itself did not lead to a decrease in feelings of loneliness, there was, however, a significant result in time, suggesting that roommates in both the control and experimental groups had fewer feelings of loneliness after completing the self-disclosure session and the post-tests.

This decrease in overall loneliness could be due to two factors. First, an additional week of becoming better acquainted with a roommate, finding friends, and acclimating to the college culture could have been enough time to decrease feelings of loneliness. It cannot be dismissed, however, that engaging in a purposeful self-disclosure session could have been a reason for a decrease in feelings of loneliness.

Implications and Recommendations

Until now, no research study has examined the effects that self-disclosure about cherished possessions has on roommates. Previous studies about cherished possessions have also not included ties to rapport, territoriality, or loneliness. The current research study explored these issues for the first time. Despite the fact that no significant results in changes of rapport, territoriality, or loneliness among female freshmen roommates were shown to be specifically related to the topic of cherished possessions, the current study did yield some results that have several implications and suggestions for future research.

First, with the exception of the Personalization and Claiming subscale of the Territoriality Questionnaire, the survey results suggested that time does have some effect on several areas that are of special importance to college roommates who share a living space. Namely, these areas are rapport, firmness of boundaries (or sharing), and feelings of loneliness. In order to determine if time is truly a significant factor, an additional study

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with a larger sample size would need to be conducted. In this study, the passage of time definitely played a part in female freshmen roommates increasing the level of rapport with one another, becoming less firm in the marking of territorial boundaries, and feeling less lonely on an individual level. While an additional week of becoming better acquainted with someone in a new and unfamiliar environment might assist the individuals involved to get along better, work out issues of sharing space, and feeling more comfortable in this new situation, this is not a given. The passage of time and getting better acquainted could have opposite effects. However, it cannot be dismissed that the mere act of being forced to participate in a self-disclosure session, whether it was about each other's textbooks or cherished possessions, was the catalyst for increasing rapport, becoming less firm in territorial boundaries, or feeling less lonely. Additional research needs to be conducted to determine if self-disclosure itself was the cause for these significant changes.

The significant changes that time made in this study have several implications. First, the changes in roommate rapport, firmness of boundaries, and feelings of loneliness were all changes for the better. One week after the first week of college, roommates had a higher level of rapport with each other, roommates appeared to have less territorial issues relating to boundaries (they engaged in sharing more), and female freshmen reported fewer feelings of loneliness. Self-disclosing cannot be dismissed as a reason for these significant changes in rapport, firmness of boundaries, and loneliness.

Since self-disclosure in general, whether it was about textbooks or cherished possessions, could have played a determining factor in positive changes in several areas, it should be noted that research from the literature review correlates to some of these

findings. For instance, Newcomb (1961) and Collins and Miller (1994) have found that self-disclosure helps develop relationships and increases the level of closeness in those relationships. Since self-disclosure leads to higher levels of trust (Worthy, et al., 1969), roommates could have felt better about certain aspects of their relationship. In addition, Waldo (1984) discovered that roommates who had high levels of communication had a better view of their roommate relationship. Zakahi and Duran (1985) have noted that there is a relationship between feelings of loneliness and self-disclosure. Since this study centered solely on females, Solano, et al. (1982) found that women, more than men, experienced feelings of loneliness when they had a lack of self-disclosure with members of the same sex.

Because self-disclosing cannot be dismissed as a reason for these significant changes, students may find comfort in knowing that rapport, some territoriality issues, and loneliness may improve if they reveal information to each other. University officials who work with students, especially those who work in residences or university housing, may want to have structured activities that encourage roommates to self-disclose about a particular topic. Such a self-disclosure activity may want to be conducted in the first week of the semester given the results that has been seen in this study. Residence officials who have to work with freshmen residents directly, like Resident Assistants, may also find comfort that the passage of a week after first being acquainted with a roommate may be enough time for female roommates to work out rapport, boundary, and loneliness issues. These are important issues to consider since roommate success is a primary goal for university officials (Hill, 2004), and the implementation of communication workshops have helped in roommate relationships (Allred & Graff, 1980; Waldo, 1989).

Based on the method and results of this study, several recommendations for future studies can be suggested. While the topic itself discussed in the self-disclosure session did not yield any significant changes in roommate rapport, territoriality, or loneliness, it is recommended that further studies are conducted on the effects of talking about one's cherished possessions. This is recommended on the basis that, until now, relatively no studies have been conducted on the topic of self-disclosure about cherished possessions. As evidenced in the literature review on cherished possessions, the topic is popular and well-researched in several areas; however, there is still much to be researched, so additional studies specific to the areas of self-disclosure about cherished possessions would help contribute to the growing body of research.

One of the limitations of this particular study was sample size. Future studies should have a larger sample of roommates. Since it was extremely challenging to recruit roommates for this study, future researchers may want to draw from several universities during the first couple of weeks of the Fall semester in order to increase the sample size. Future researchers also may want to consider another method of contacting potential participants, since many students did not check their new e-mail account during this study.

Future researchers may also want to replicate this study with male freshmen college roommates. In addition, another study could compare the results between male and female roommates. Along this same line, future researchers may want to compare differences in roommates who were previously unacquainted prior to cohabitation to those who knew each other and voluntarily chose to live together. It might be interesting to see if those who knew each other prior to cohabitation had any changes in their levels

of roommate rapport, territoriality, or loneliness.

As previously mentioned, a limitation of this study was the time that the participants actually engaged in the self-disclosure session. Although there was an allotted time of 30 minutes, all of the pairs completed the self-disclosure session under 15 minutes. Such a limited amount of self-disclosure time could have had an effect on the overall results of the study. It may be helpful for future researchers to take this into consideration when replicating or modifying the methodology of this particular study. Future researchers may want to consider a different format for the self-disclosure component like having group interactions and dialogue or including a moderator who would prompt the roommates by asking questions. The self-disclosure session may need to be conducted in the actual residence of the roommates. Having such an interaction in their room with the physical object of value in their presence could have a bearing on the results.

Although this study's purpose was not to determine differences in results based on race or culture, it may be interesting to study what bearing, if any, a person's race and/or culture may play regarding cherished possessions and the self-disclosure about them. Race or cultural differences in self-disclosure techniques could be a variable that may affect the results. This could be a research question that could be pursued in a similar study with a literature review exploring race and cultural differences in self-disclosure. In addition, the racial or cultural differences in valuing and owning cherished possessions would need to be explored, as this could also be a variable in how those objects play a role in their lives.

In conclusion, while this study did not show that self-disclosure about cherished

possessions solely had an effect on roommate rapport, territoriality issues, or loneliness, the significant changes that the passage of time had did bring about several implications and suggestions for future research. Taking into account that this particular subject area has never been studied, what has been learned does help contribute to the variety of subject areas that this study took into account. The current research also offers an opportunity for future researchers to build upon what has been discovered and ask different questions relating to self-disclosure and cherished possessions. Looking at the various aspects of methodology, limitations, findings, and recommendations may assist in producing a more comprehensive study that could have the potential for producing additional and different results.

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Appendix A

Self-Disclosure Script Questions

Directions:

You and your roommate are to engage in an in-depth conversation about a particular cherished possession of yours by answering each of the following questions in order. Make sure that each of you converse about each question in detail.
This conversation will be audio-recorded. Before you begin your conversation, press record, state your ID number, and begin your conversation. Upon completion of your conversation, please stop the recorder, and see the researcher.

1. Please describe in detail how you came to acquire this possession.

2. Please describe in detail the importance or special meaning this possession has to you.

3. Do other people know the significance of this possession?

4. What particular memories does this possession invoke?

5. What specific feelings does the possession invoke?

6. Please describe how you would feel if this possession was damaged, stolen, or destroyed.

7. Please describe how you would feel if you discovered someone handling your possession.

8. How does this possession relate to your identity as an individual?

9. Do you use your possession as a way to cope with problems? If so, how?

10. Where do you keep your possession, and why do you keep it in this particular location?

11. In what ways does this possession contribute to your adaptation to living in a new environment?

12. Besides this particular possession, do you have other cherished possessions, and if so, what are they?

Directions:

You and your roommate are to engage in an in-depth conversation about a particular textbook of yours by answering each of the following questions in order. Make sure that each of you converse about each question in detail.
This conversation will be audio-recorded. Before you begin your conversation, press record, state your ID number, and begin your conversation. Upon completion of your conversation, please stop the recorder, and see the researcher.

1.   Please describe in detail how you came to acquire this textbook.

2.   Please describe in detail the importance or special meaning this textbook has to

       you.

3.   Do other people know the significance of this textbook?

4.   What particular memories does this textbook invoke?

5.   What specific feelings does the textbook invoke?

6.   Please describe how you would feel if this textbook was damaged, stolen, or

       destroyed.

7.   Please describe how you would feel if you discovered someone handling your

       textbook.

8.   How does this textbook relate to your identity as an individual?

9.   Do you use your textbook as a way to cope with problems? If so, how?

10.   Where do you keep your textbook, and why do you keep it in this particular

       location?

11.   In what ways does this textbook contribute to your adaptation to living in a new

       environment?

12.   Besides this particular textbook, do you have other textbooks, and if so, what are

       they?