Review

The role of religiosity in family communication and the development of materialistic values

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While studies of communication effects on consumer behavior of the young have focused mainly on the effects of mass media, little research has examined the effects of interpersonal communication. One finds relatively little theoretical and empirical work regarding the role of interpersonal communication in the development of materialistic values of young people. This article deals with one important type of interpersonal communication – family communication and the effect of religiosity in the communication process. It conceptualizes the family communication processes and effects, reviews literature regarding the role of family communication in the development of materialistic values of children and adolescents, and young adults and develops a set of propositions on the basis of theory research, and suggests directions for future research.

Key words: Materialism, family communication, religiosity.

INTRODUCTION

There are at least eight major socialization agents in modern societies (Reimer and Rosengren, 1990). Traditional socialization agents include family, peer group, work group, church, law and school; they can be found in most societies. Two socialization agents are modern products: (a) large organizations representing popular movements and interest groups, and (b) the mass media (Reimer and Rosengren, 1990). People often interact with socialization agents and then take in consciously and unconsciously social norms, values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors endorsed by these agents. As postmodern society grows more and more atomistic, individualistic and alienated, socialization agent becomes more and more powerful (Croteau and Hoynes, 2000). Ward (1974a) offered a classical definition of consumer socialization: "the processes by which young people acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace".

Materialism among today's youth has also received strong interest among educators, parents, consumer activist and government regulators for several reasons.

For instance, many studies on materialism among college and high school students show dramatic increases in materialistic values (Korten, 1999). Furthermore, the popular press has also characterized youth as "hyper-consumers". Social scientists have responded with a burst of recent books that decry materialism among young consumers and criticize marketing's role in the development of materialistic values (Kasser, 2002; Schor, 1999).

Studies until today are centered mostly on personality and social characteristics that are correlated with materialism, either as antecedents or as consequences. A major limitation of previous studies into the effects of socialization agents has been the limited scope of the analyses, confined to a given developmental stage (for example, childhood, adolescents).

Cross sectional data analyzed at a specific development stage in a person's life tell us little about the possible casual influences of socialization agents, leaving room for criticisms about the nature and direction of influence between materialism and measures of the person's interaction with socialization agents (Moschis, 1985). Furthermore, it is not clear whether specific socialization agents in general, and communication environment in particular, can instill materialistic values in people.

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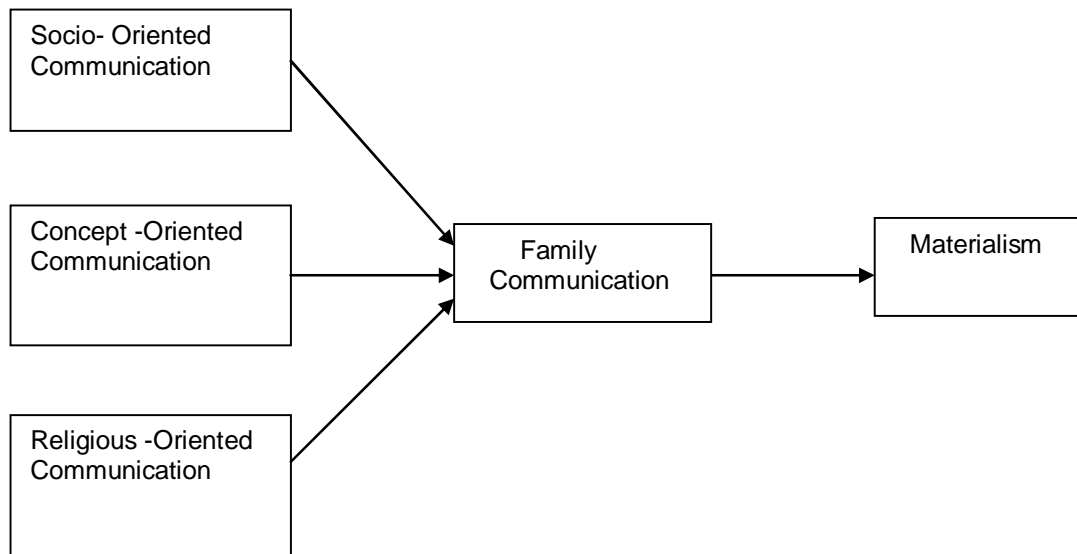
Figure 1. Conceptual model. Adapted from Mochis and Churchill (1979).

The purpose of this paper is to propose a conceptual model to explain the mechanism responsible for the development of materialistic values (Figure 1). The role of family communication, particularly the effect of religiosity, in the development of materialistic values is assessed. In addition to that, this article presents a research update on family communication processes and their effects on the development of materialistic values. Specifically, family communication is conceptualized and its role in the development of materialistic values is examined. This article also reviews previous research on religiosity and how its implication in family communication process. Based on theoretical and research perspectives, a set of propositions is developed. Finally, the article summarizes existing knowledge in the area and suggests directions for future research.

Objectives of study

1. To examine the effect of family communication on materialistic values.
2. To examine the effect of religiously-oriented family communication on the development of materialistic values.

MATERIALISM

In the relevant literature, materialism is defined from various social, cultural, psychological, and economic perspectives: a way of life, a value orientation, a cultural system, a personality trait, a second-order value, an aspiration, and so on. Daun (1983) described materialism as a lifestyle in which a high level of material consumption functioned as a goal and served as a set of plans. Materialism lends meaning to life and provides an aim for everyday work. Fox and Lears (1983) regarded materialism as the ceaseless pursuit of the "good life" through consumption. Ward and Wackman (1971) defined materialism as "an orientation which views material goods and money as important for personal happiness and social progress". Inglehart (1981) considered materialism as an economic orientation to life, a cultural or structural variable, giving precedence to economic values over other values such as freedom, civil power, aesthetics, and friendship. He argued that materialism was a value situated within the constellation of a value system. Similarly, Mukerji (1983) regarded materialism as "a cultural system in which material interests are not made subservient to other social goals" and material self-interests are prominent. Belk (1984) observed: materialism reflects the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions. At the highest levels of materialism, such possessions assume a central place in a person's life and are believed to provide the greatest sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

More relevant to this paper, Richins and Dawson (1990) considered materialism a value orientation with at least three components: a status component, which reflects the intended and actual use of material objects as a means of social recognition and to symbolize one's personal success; the expectation or aspirational component of materialism concerns the extent to which an individual believes that acquisitions of material objects will lead to personal happiness and enjoyment of life; and an affective component represented by the degree to which an individual actually does find possessions to be a

source of satisfaction. In other words, materialism is "an organizing or second-order value that incorporates both the importance placed on certain end states (achievement and enjoyment values) and beliefs that possessions are appropriate means to achieve these states."

Richins and Dawson's (1992) concept of materialism rests on the two processes of acquisition and possession. They believe that these processes organize and guide the materialist's plans and behaviours under the expectation of certain favourable end states. There are three themes in their concept of materialism. First, acquisition is central to the lives of materialists. It not only serves as a focal point, but also organizes behavioural patterns. Acquisition serves as a set of plans and goals that directs and guides daily endeavours. Second, acquisition is a means of achieving happiness and well-being in life. To materialists, both acquisition and possession of goods are essential to satisfaction and well-being in life. Finally, materialists use possessions to display success or status. They judge their own and others' success by the number and quality of possessions accumulated. They view themselves as successful to the extent they can possess products that project the desired self-image. Materialism represents a mind-set or constellation of attitudes regarding the relative importance of acquisition and possession of objects in one's life. For materialists, possessions and their acquisition are at the forefront of personal goals that dictate their "way of life". They value possessions and their acquisition more highly than most other matters and activities in life. For Richins and Dawson, materialism is a value that "guides people's choices and conduct in a variety of situations, including, but not limited to consumption areas". It should be able to influence not only the type of products purchased, but also the quantity. This paper follows that of Richins and Dawson to define materialism as a value of at least three components: acquisition centrality, acquisition as the pursuit of happiness, and possession-defined success.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION AND MATERIALISM

The degree of influence that a child has in purchasing is directly related to patterns of interaction and communication within the family (Carlson and Grossbart, 1988; Carlson et al., 1992; Rose, 1999). Research on family communication, has linked the type or quality of communication to a variety of parental practices and consumer competencies in children. Family communication provides a foundation for children's approach to interact with the marketplace (Moschis, 1985), is inextricably linked to parental approaches to child-rearing (Carlson and Grossbart, 1988; Rose, 1999), and influences the development of children's consumer skills, knowledge, and attitudes (Moschis, 1985).

Research in this area, has generally utilized a single respondent, with early research primarily focusing on adolescents (Moschis and Mitchell, 1986) and later research examining the perceptions of mothers of younger children, under the age of 10 (Carlson et al., 1990; Rose et al., 1998).

The domain of family communication includes the content, the frequency, and the nature of family member interactions (Palan and Wilkes, 1998). The origins of family communication research in marketing can be traced to a study conducted in political socialization (McLeod and Chaffee, 1972), which utilized two dimensions from Newcomb's (1953) general model of affective communication. The first dimension, *socio-orientation*, captures vertical communication, which is indicative of hierarchical patterns of interaction and establishes deference among family members (McLeod and Chaffee, 1972). This type of interaction has also resulted in controlling and monitoring children's consumption-related activities (Moschis, 1985). The second dimension, *concept-orientation*, actively solicits the child's input in discussions, evaluates issues from different perspectives, and focuses on providing an environment that stimulates the child to develop his/her own views (McLeod and Chaffee, 1972). This type of communication results in earlier and increased experience and learning of different consumer skills and orientations among children (Moschis, 1985).

Several studies of consumer socialization have utilized these dimensions to create a four-category typology of family communication (Carlson et al., 1990; Moschis and Moore, 1979a; Rose et al., 1998). Pluralistic parents (low socio-orientation, high concept-orientation) encourage their children to engage in overt communication and discussions. This communication pattern results in children that possess independent perspectives and become skilled consumers. Consensual parents (high socio-orientation, high concept-orientation) encourage children to formulate independent ideas, but maintain a hierarchy of power within the family and control and monitor their children's consumption environment. Laissez-faire parents (low socio-orientation, low concept-orientation) can be characterized as having low levels of parent-child communication in general. Children in this type of environment are more influenced by external socialization agents such as the media and peers. Finally, protective parents (high socio-orientation, low concept-orientation) emphasize obedience. They promote vertical relationships with their children, focus less on issue-oriented communication, and tightly control and monitor their children's consumption (Moschis, 1985).

Studies have shown that the family environment affects the endorsement of materialistic values. Parental styles and practices that do not fully meet children's needs are associated with materialism (Kasser et al., 1995). Prior studies have found that family environment is associated with the relative strength of adolescents' materialistic values. Family environments were very important predictors of the adolescents' materialism to the extent that

their mothers' materialism level and report of family communication style alone could reliably predict their child's level of endorsement of materialistic values (Flouri, 2000). Children in families that use socially-oriented communication patterns, which stress harmony among family members and the avoidance of conflict demonstrate higher levels of materialism (Moschis and Moore, 1979a). Children in families that use concept-oriented communication patterns, which encourage independent thinking, demonstrate lower levels of materialism (Moore and Moschis, 1981). Adolescents who communicate less frequently with their parents about consumption have been found to be more materialistic (Moore and Moschis, 1981). It should be stressed, however, that socially-oriented and concept-oriented communication patterns are not mutually exclusive. For example, a survey found that Chinese families exhibited high levels of socially-oriented as well as concept-oriented family communication (Chan and McNeal, 2003).

RELIGIOUSLY ORIENTED COMMUNICATION AND MATERIALISM

The tendencies to acquire and possess worldly goods have been subject to widespread criticism throughout history. Belk (1983) discussion attempts to distil the key behavioural assumptions and issues raised by these criticisms. Differing assumptions and issues were shown to lead to different logical stances toward acquisitive and possessive tendencies in society. Criticisms of consumer interactions with possessions are directed at consumer traits such as waste and overindulgence, at presumed motivational mechanisms such as greed and envy, and at the more general belief that material gratifications are a viable means to happiness and satisfaction in life. Belk (1983) examine the behavioural assumptions and issues raised by such criticisms and outline a research agenda that was more attuned to the basic human issues involving the acquisition and use of consumer goods. Belk provided a summary of major criticism of possessiveness and acquisitiveness. He explained that the broadest and most sustained criticisms have arisen in religious philosophy. The more general of these criticisms have been aimed at the singular or excessive pursuit of material goods at the expense of "higher" pursuits. He explained that in organized religion. Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity all condemn concentrating on building excessive material wealth.

Belk (1983) have also discussed the relevance of materialism to consumer behaviour in which materialism was advanced as a critical but neglected macro consumer-behaviour issue. Measures for materialism and three sub traits, envy, nongenerosity, and possessiveness, were presented and tested. In the study, the sub traits were compared over three generations of consumers from the same families, and measure validity was explored via responses to a sentence completion task. Two separated studies were conducted to establish the reliability and validity of an overall materialism scale based on items from the possessiveness, nongenerosity, and envy subscales. A second study used three generations of members from within the same families in order to test the hypotheses of generational differences and to further examined the validity of all four scales. Materialism was thought to emerge among individuals whose occupational status mobility were blocked by prejudice or lack of skills, and involved substituting possessions for job success. The group of students from the religious institute was expected to rank lowest in materialism, since organized religion was generally opposed to materialistic attitudes and practices. The results indicated that possessiveness, nongenerosity, and envy were found to be subscales of overall materialism. The expectation that religious institute groups would have the lowest materialism scores was supported. La Barbera and Gurhan's (1997) empirical study suggested that, for religious individuals with "sacred values", participation in consumeristic materialism related negatively to subjective well-being. The study found that some aspects of materialism, as well as nongenerosity and envy, related positively to subjective wellbeing in participants classified as non-born-again, low religious consumers. The research suggested that highly religious individuals experience high states of fulfilment and well being motivated individuals, who were genuinely committed to their faith (highly religious). The study confirmed the positive relationship between religiosity and well-being, with a significant association between religious service attendance and general affect. They also found that some aspects of materialism, as well as non - generosity and envy, were related positively to subjective well-being in participants classified as nonreligious consumers, but negatively to religious consumers. A more conservative interpretation of their findings was that the negative association between materialism and subjective well-being were limited to, or at least more pronounced among, individuals with high levels of collective-oriented values (for example, religious values).

Kau et al. (2000) conducted a study in Singapore, in an attempt to measure the effect of materialistic inclination on the degree of life satisfaction. Based on a large scale values and lifestyles survey of consumers aged 15 and above, an adapted scale of materialistic inclination was developed. The respondents were classified into two distinct groups: high and low level of materialistic inclination. Demographically, the results revealed that the level of materialistic inclination deferred significantly between respondents of different gender and with different religious affiliation. With regards to the level of materialistic inclination by demographic dispositions, it was noted that gender and religion were highly significant. With regards to religion, respondents from different religious affiliation, namely, Buddhism, Taoism,

Islam, Hinduism, Christianity and no religion were represented. It was noted that people with no religious affiliation appeared to be more materialistic in their outlook. Swinyard et al. (2001) conducted a study using probability samples of adults in the U.S and Singapore and measured the aspects of materialism and religiosity. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between life satisfaction and religion as a means, but a negative relationship between life satisfaction and religion as an end, and no significant relationship between life satisfaction and religion as a quest. The data also showed a significant negative relationship between life satisfaction and overall materialism. The findings showed that intrinsic religiosity had a positive impact on indivi-duals' quality of life in the U.S. The study also determined that in the U.S., those individuals who look to religion as primarily social and obligatory are less satisfied with their lives. The researchers concluded that life satisfaction was not associated with people's material accumulation, but rather with their perceived inner world. The results of the study suggested that individuals who engaged in religious activities and adhered to religious values for intrinsic reasons were generally more fulfilled and less apt to utilize material possessions in an attempt to derive satisfaction. Burroughs and Rindfleisch (2002) have examined the relationship between material values and other important life values. In addition, they draw on values theory to examine the conceptualization of why materialism was antithetical to well-being. Specifically, they proposed that the individual orientation of material values conflicted with collective-oriented values, such as family values and religious values. Using a survey sample of 373 adults from across the United States and an experimental study of 120 college students, they found considerable support for this conflicting values perspective. The study hypothesized that materialism was opposed to collective-oriented values, (religious values) and materialism was associated with heightened psychological tension among those with high levels of collective-oriented values, and this tension lowers well-being. The motives underlying materialism (for example, acquisitiveness, self-centeredness) should conflict with the motives underlying more self-transcendent values such as religious values (for example, spirituality, and selflessness). The result of their study indicated that materialism was negatively related to collective-oriented values. Materialism was negatively associated with specific collective-oriented value, religious values. The degree to which materialism resulted in values conflict appeared to be a function of an individual's level of collective-oriented values, namely, religiosity. The results suggested that collective oriented values (a significant component of many spiritual belief systems) were in conflict with materialism; however, little conflict existed for individuals with low levels of collectivism/spirituality. Burroughs and Rindfleish (2002) found a significant inte-raction between materialism and religious values. They

also found that internal conflict increased in situations of high materialism for participants with religious values. In a second experiment study with college students, the results indicated a significant interaction between material values and religious values. It was noted that among subjects who are high in religious values, there was an increase in the level of value conflict experienced in moving from low to high materialism groups. In contrast for those who were low in religious values, the level of value conflict experienced did not appear to vary as a function of their level of material values. The degree to which materialism results in values conflict appeared to be a function of an individual's level of collective-oriented values, namely religiosity.

Using data from the latest World Value Survey, Inglehart and Wetzel (2005) showed how the scores for Latin America countries are among the highest for the question (using a likert scale) asking "God is very important in my life" as well as combined scores of happiness and satisfaction. Religiosity also significantly positively influenced relative life satisfaction for the Middle East region. The result was similar to the work of Suhail and Chaudhury (2004) which demonstrated religious affiliation to be one of the better predictors of well being in Pakistan. In addition, Cherrier and Munoz (2007) conducted a study among college students aged between 19 to 42 years old in the U.S. One of their major findings indicated that spiritual reflection was positively related to financial detachment. Last but not least, the work of Speck and Roy (2008) across the U.S, New Zealand, New Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, the far and southeast indicated that religiosity plays a countervailing role in negatively influencing materialism in Latin America and Middle Eastern countries. In testing the hypothesis on whether religiosity would negatively influence materialism, the results were supported for Latin America and the Middle East. Table 1 provides a summary of major studies and their findings between religiosity and materialism (Appendix A).

The extent to which religious beliefs have on family interaction, have however remained remarkably unno-ticed. When researchers described families, religious traditions were not noted, but religious beliefs created a taken for granted subtext for the interaction patterns (Vangelisti, 2004). Religious affiliation has connections to gender role, parental styles, as well as family/work decisions. Mahoney (2001) reported that there is some evidence for linking religiousness with greater use of adaptive communication skills, collaboration in handling disagreement, positivity in family relationship, and pa-rental coping. Some data reported an inverse relationship between religion and domestic violence and marital verbal conflicts. The research they included major focused on Western societies. If religious beliefs are accepted as impacting family interactions, then non western societies remain a fertile field for research. Although, occasionally, religious families rituals (Baxter

and Braithwaite, 2002), and interfaith relationship (Hugh and Dickson, 2001) has been explored in the study of family communication, the main area of reference has been to certain faith enrichment programs.

To summarize, there appears to be reasonably good supportive evidence that the family communication is instrumental in teaching young people basic rational aspects of consumption, and in the development of their materialistic values. It influences the development of materialistic orientations related to a hierarchy of consumer decisions delineated by previous writers. This leads to the following sets of propositions:

P1. There are significant differences between young adults' family communication patterns and their level of materialistic values.

a. There is a positive relationship between young adults who are characterized by a socio oriented family communication and their level of materialistic values.
b. There is a negative relationship between young adults who are characterized by a concept oriented family communication and their level of materialistic values.
c. There is a negative relationship between young adults who are characterized by a religiously oriented family communication and their level of materialistic values.

CONCLUSION AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The information presented in this article suggests some generalizations supported by reasonably adequate evidence and others which are more speculative and require additional research. Parents appear to play an important role in the consumer socialization of their offspring, and they are instrumental in teaching them the rational aspects of consumption. Youngsters appear to acquire a variety of other consumption-related orientations skills, and values (particularly, materialistic values) from their parents. Parents influence the development of materialistic values among their children's directly through several communication processes (both overt and cognitive), including overt interaction about consumption matters (for example, purposive training), using reinforcement mechanisms (both positive and negative), and providing opportunities for the child to observe their own consumer behaviors. Apparently, different communication processes are involved in the direct transmission of specific values (for example, materialism) and behaviors from parent to child, and these processes vary by socio-demographic characteristics.

Family communication processes lead to rather different interaction patterns with other sources of consumer learning and development of specific values. Several avenues for future research are possible. Clearly, there is a need for better understanding of the nature of family influence. We need to understand the communication processes involved in the transmission and acquisition of certain values (such as materialism) from parent to child and how these vary by socio-demographic characteristics.

The research reviewed here suggests that family communications have been examined in the context of how parents affect the development of materialistic values of their children. It would also be useful to examine communication effects when one parent's style of communication with the child (FCP) is quite different from that of the other parent. Much of the research needed in this area can only be addressed using certain research designs. Because communication involves exchange of information and subsequent "effects", cross-sectional designs may not be adequate for studying certain types of family communication processes. Rather, experimental and longitudinal designs could enable the researcher to better study such processes and their effects.

In summary, this article has attempted to present an update on the present knowledge and research on the role of family communications in the development of materialistic values. It has also attempted to integrate much of the information in the area and has presented propositions to guide future research and theory development.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Table 1. Summary of major studies and their findings between religiosity and materialism.

Author(s)	Sample	Dependent variable	Independent variable	Major findings
Belk (1984)	338 subjects across a variety of occupations.	Belk's materialism scale (9 items measuring possessiveness, 7 items measuring non generosity and 8 items for envy).	A single item measure of happiness.	The non-materialism of the religious institute students was predicated on the long-standing opposition of organized religion to excessive materialism and its alternative offerings of spiritual rewards. Reports of mean levels for three materialism traits (possessiveness, nongenerosity and envy) between two groups (machine shops workers and religious institute students) indicated that religious institute students were less materialistic.
Belk (1985)	338 subjects across a variety of occupations.	24 items adapted from Belk's (1984) materialism scale	A single item measure of happiness and a single measure of life satisfaction.	The expectation that religious institute groups would have the lowest materialism scores was supported, although the magnitude of difference was not great.
La Barbera and Gurhan (1997)	241 subjects across a variety of ages, education and income.	Belk's (1984) materialism scale and Ward and Wackman's (1971); 6 items measuring materialist attitudes.	2 items measuring religiosity.	Significant correlation were found between materialistic attitudes and subjective well being (SWB) (-0.40), religious service attendance (-0.35) and importance of religion (0.30). The envy dimensions of Belk's scale is negatively related to well being ($r = -0.39$, $p < 0.001$). The findings indicated a negative relationship between SWB and materialism and a positive relationship between religiosity and SWB.
Evrard and Boff (1998)	125 college students.	18 items measuring materialism adapted from Richins and Dawson's MVS.	3 items measuring religious practices.	There was an opposition between people who considered themselves as religious whatever degree and non-religious people, the later being significantly more critical with services and products offered on the market.
Kau et al. (2000).	1,534 Singaporeans aged 15 and above.	A 7 items measure of materialistic inclinations from Richins and Dawson (1992).	A single item measuring religious affiliation.	A distribution of the level of materialistic inclination by demographic dispositions indicated that religion is highly significant at the 0.00 level, viz. Christians were noted to embrace a lower level of materialistic inclination whereas people with no religious affiliation appeared to be more materialistic.

Table 1. Contd.

Burroughs and Rindfleisch (2002).	2,000 adults American; (Study 1, survey, Study 2, experiment).	An 18 item adapted version of Richins and Dawson's (1992) material value scale.	6 items measuring religious values.	Significant interaction between materialism and religious values were found (F (1.59) = 5.16, p < 0.05). Materialism is negatively correlated with collective oriented values, such as religious values (r = -0.22 p < 0.001). Results also indicated a positive relationship between materialism and stress among respondents with high religious values (b = 0.11, p < 0.05).
Cherrier and Munoz (2007).	College student sample (n = 266) aged between 19 to 42 years old in the U.S.	2 items measuring financial detachment (Cherrier, 2002).	2 items measuring spiritual reflection.	Spiritual reflection was positively related to financial detachment (P-value = 0.000, SE = 0.113).
Speck and Roy (2008).	1211 college students across U.S, New Zealand, New Europe, Latin America, the middle east, the far and southeast.	11 items adapted version of Richins (2004) materialism value scale.	3 items measuring religiosity.	The results revealed that religiosity plays a countervailing role in negatively influencing materialism in Latin America and Middle Eastern countries. In testing the hypothesis on whether religiosity would negatively influences materialism, the results was supported for Latin America (y = -0.14, t = -2.01) and the Middle East (y = -0.21, t = -1.88).