

Memories and experiences make a piece of jewellery important for a woman, researcher finds

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Women own and wear jewellery for the sake of others. Through their use of jewellery, women indicate belonging to a certain group, such as family or persons with a similar worldview or values. Jewellery is important for women, as it is associated with a number of significant memories and personal experiences.

These are findings from a dissertation by Petra Ahde-Deal, in which she explores the social reasons for women to wear and possess jewellery. Ahde-Deal will defend her dissertation at the Aalto University School of Arts, [Design](#) and Architecture on Friday 25 January 2013. The study is first of its kind, since research in the field of design has not focused on the significance of personal experiences as a motive to wear and possess jewellery.

"Pieces of jewellery are not just contemporary objects; they also function to bring together past, present and [future generations](#). They carry with them memories of relationships, family ties and important milestones in life. Pieces of jewellery that stay in the family for several generations carry particular significance, as they contain so many meanings," Petra Ahde-Deal explains.

A jewellery box tells a woman's life story

As her research methods, Ahde-Deal used design probes and in-depth

interviews. A total of 28 women from southern Finland and the United States documented their use of jewellery for nine days by keeping a diary and taking photos of themselves. The women were between the ages of 33 and 89, and came from very different backgrounds. Based on this self-documentation, Ahde-Deal conducted in-depth interviews that often evolved into personal discussions.

"Many times, going through the person's jewellery box meant going through their life story. The pieces of jewellery are associated with a great deal of emotion, and their histories are linked with loved ones and significant life events," Ahde-Deal describes.

Preliminary material for the dissertation research also consisted of extensive story material written by Finnish women, including 464 stories of pieces of jewellery significant to the writers. The theoretical foundation for the study is largely based on sociology, but its results also contribute to the areas of design and jewellery research.

The dissertation '[Women](#) and Jewelry - A Social Approach to Wearing and Possessing Jewelry' will be examined at the Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture (Sampo Hall at Media Centre Lume, Hämeentie 135 C, Helsinki, Finland) on 25 January 2013 at 12 noon. Professor Christena Nippert-Eng from the Illinois Institute of Technology, USA, will act as the opponent.

The dissertation was published in January 2013 in the Aalto University publication series *Doctoral Dissertations*.

Provided by Aalto University

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