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**Children's intrinsic and extrinsic values:
Sources of internalization and implications for well-being**

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Abstract

This study examined the acquisition of intrinsic and extrinsic values among children. Participants ($n = 218$) completed measures of intrinsic and extrinsic values, happiness, life satisfaction, and anxiety, and rated their hero's perceived values and the importance placed on each of these values by their caregiver. Results revealed that children's intrinsic values were associated with greater life satisfaction and happiness, whereas extrinsic values were associated with lower behavior ratings made by classroom teachers. Children's intrinsic values were significantly predicted from the intrinsic values internalized from their caregivers and their hero's perceived intrinsic values, whereas extrinsic values were significantly predicted from the extrinsic values internalized from their caregivers, their hero's perceived extrinsic values, and their best friend's extrinsic values. Internalized values for caregivers and hero's perceived values significantly predicted children's intrinsic and extrinsic values.

Key Words: intrinsic; extrinsic; values; life satisfaction; happiness; internalization; well-being; aspirations; moral development

Children's intrinsic and extrinsic values:

Sources of internalization and implications for well-being

The sources from which children acquire and internalize their values have long been of interest to psychologists, and attention has squarely focused on the role played by parents in this regard (e.g., Grusec, 1997). However, despite this extensive literature, very little research has investigated the acquisition of intrinsic and extrinsic values, a distinction first made empirically by Kasser and Ryan (1993). Intrinsic values refer to aspirations for affiliation with friends and family, autonomy and self-direction, personal growth, and community involvement. In contrast, extrinsic values are concerned with aspirations for financial success, fame, and attractive appearance.

Two studies provide initial evidence for some sources of intrinsic and extrinsic values. Kasser, Ryan, Zax, and Sameroff (1995) found that teenagers were more likely to value financial success as a central life aspiration (an extrinsic value) when their mothers were less nurturant and especially valued the teenager's financial success, and when they grew up in less advantageous socioeconomic circumstances. Kasser, Koestner, and Lokes (2002) found that, over a 26-year prospective follow-up, children whose parents were more restrictive and from lower socioeconomic status were more likely to focus on conformity values and less on self-direction values. Similarly, a lack of parental warmth was associated with later preference for security values in the child. These studies both point toward the role of parenting and socioeconomic status in influencing the child's acquisition of particular value sets. However, they tell us little about the relative influence of diverse factors that may affect children's internalization of values.

In a modern society that is characterized by globalization trends, the media, and the role of celebrities, there is a need to more fully understand the role of these different factors in influencing children's values. To date, data gathered from diverse research teams, settings, methodologies, and cultures have demonstrated intrinsic values to be associated with greater well-being, whereas extrinsic values have been demonstrated to be associated with lower well-being, or not associated (see Kasser, 2004, for a review). For example, Casas, Gonzalez, Figuer, and Coenders (2004) found that the more adolescents considered non-materialistic values (vs. the materialistic values of money, power, image) to be important, the higher their satisfaction with life. Comparatively, Piko (2006) found that among adolescents materialistic happiness (e.g., "I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things") was negatively related, whereas materialistic success (e.g., "I admire people who own expensive cars and clothes") was positively related, to life satisfaction. Similarly, Kasser and Ahuvia (2002) found strong internalized materialistic values to be associated with lowered self-actualization, vitality, and happiness among business students. Further, Piko and Keresztes (2006) found that adolescents who engage in regular physical exercise prefer less extrinsic values as life goals for their future, whereas less active students place more importance on extrinsic aspirations (e.g., financial success, social recognition, image). Moreover, results revealed that more active students report better self-perceived health, greater fitness, and higher levels of life satisfaction than less active students (Piko & Keresztes, 2006). Similarly, Kasser and Ryan (1993) found that centrality of aspirations for self-acceptance, affiliation, and community feeling was positively associated with well-being, whereas a highly central focus on financial success was negatively associated with well-being (less self-actualization and vitality, more depression and anxiety), among adolescents.

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between values, behavior, and well-being, and to examine the acquisition of intrinsic and extrinsic values among children. Eight potential sources of value internalization are to be examined: 1) internalized male caregiver values; 2) internalized female caregiver values; 3) hero's perceived values; 4) best friend's values; 5) male caregiver values; 6) female caregiver values; 7) male caregiver parenting values; and 8) female caregiver parenting values. Based on extant theory and research it is hypothesized that children's intrinsic values will be positively associated with well-being, whereas extrinsic values will be negatively associated with poor behavior. Further, it is hypothesized that the internalized values of male and female caregiver's values will predict the internalization of intrinsic and extrinsic values among children.

Method

Participants

Two hundred eighteen children participated in the study. There were 119 boys and 99 girls, with a mean age of 11.2 years ($SD = 1.18$ years, range = 9.33 – 13.25 years). Child participants were primarily White (72.9%) or Indian (17.8%). All child participants were attending a primary school (up to age 11 years, $n = 116$) or secondary school (from age 11 years and up, $n = 102$) in the West Midlands region of England.

One hundred and five parents or caregivers of these children participated in the study. There were 57 females and 48 males, with a mean age of 40.82 years ($SD = 4.74$ years, range = 30 – 55 years). Their relationships to the child were as mother ($n = 57$), father ($n = 45$), or stepfather ($n = 3$). The stepfathers indicated that they had known their stepchild for between four and five years. They were primarily married or living as married ($n = 99$), or divorced ($n = 5$) or

separated ($n = 1$). Parents and caregivers were primarily of a White ($n = 87$) or Indian ($n = 14$) ethnic origin, and indicated that they were educated to the level of O-level / GCSE ($n = 40$), A-level ($n = 14$), Bachelor's degree ($n = 20$), Graduate degree ($n = 16$), or other professional qualification ($n = 15$).

Seven class teachers also participated in the study to provide ratings of the children in their class, but we did not collect their demographic information.

Measures

Children

1. *Children's Aspiration Index (CAI)*. Children rated 21 items for their importance to them, using 5-point Likert scale (1 = "Not At All" to 5 = "The Most Important"). These 21 items were adapted from the 32-item Aspiration Index (Kasser & Ryan, 1996), and were designed to retain the content of the items and cover the seven value domains identified, while using a language and syntax that was more readily comprehensible to children. Preliminary pilot work (not included here) established that these 21 items were taken forward for further analysis. These 21 items were subjected to exploratory principal components analysis, which we constrained to a higher-order two-factor solution on the basis of prior theory and research (e.g., Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996). This two-factor solution (see Table 1) revealed a first factor that we labelled "Extrinsic Values" ($\alpha = .89$) and a second factor that we labelled "Intrinsic Values" ($\alpha = .69$). Items that loaded greater than .4 on their factor, and less than .3 on the other factor, were retained. This resulted in a final 18-item scale, with 9 items measuring each of intrinsic and extrinsic values. Higher scores on each factor indicated that the child attached a greater importance to that value dimension.

2. *Children's Happiness Scale (CHS)*. Children rated 10 items that were taken from the Depression-Happiness Scale (Joseph & Lewis, 1998), and on the basis of preliminary pilot work (not included here), were established as being comprehensible to children in our sample age range (i.e., 10 years and older). Responses were made according to the frequency of the child's experience (0 = "Never", 3 = "Often"). These items were subjected to exploratory principal components analysis, and five items were retained that loaded greater than .62 on this factor, which we labelled as "Children's Happiness" ($\alpha = .75$). Sample items include: "I felt happy" and "I felt cheerful" (see Appendix I).
3. *Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS)*: Huebner, 1991a; Huebner, 1991b). This is a 7-item self-report scale, which assesses global life satisfaction for students aged 8-18. Students are required to respond to each item using a 6-point Likert scale (1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 6 = "Strongly Agree"). Higher scores indicate greater life satisfaction.
4. *Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale (RCMAS)*: Reynolds & Richmond, 1978). This scale asks participants whether or not they have experienced 16 different symptoms of anxiety. Participants simply respond yes or no. Responses are then totalled to yield a manifest anxiety score, with higher scores indicating a greater level of manifest anxiety.
5. *Hero's Perceived Values*. Children rated how much they believed it was important to their hero (defined as "people we look up to and admire...we might even want to be like them") to pursue each of seven values. There were four intrinsic values (have good friends, be him / herself, help other people, be healthy and energetic; $\alpha = .78$) and three extrinsic values (be rich, be famous, be attractive to other people; $\alpha = .41$) (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Children rated "How important do you think it is to YOUR HERO that..." on a 5-point Likert scale (1 =

“*Not At All*” to 5 = “*Very*”). Higher scores indicated that the child believed their hero rated that value as more important.

6. *Internalized Male / Female Caregiver Values*. Children rated how much they believed their male and female caregivers placed importance on each of seven values in the child themselves. Ratings were made separately for male caregivers and for female caregivers. There were four intrinsic values (have good friends, be yourself, help other people, be healthy and energetic; male $\alpha = .57$, female $\alpha = .50$) and three extrinsic values (be rich, be famous, be attractive to other people; male $\alpha = .71$, female $\alpha = .72$) (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Ratings were made in response to the statement “*How important does your male [or female] caregiver think it is that YOU...*” according to a 5-point Likert scale (1 = “*Not At All*” to 5 = “*Very*”). Higher scores indicated that the child perceived that his or hers male/female caregiver rated that value as more important in the child themselves.

Male and Female Caregivers

1. *Aspiration Index* (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Male and female caregivers were presented with 32 possible aspirations that they rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = “*Not At All*” to 5 = “*Very*”) according to how important each aspiration was to them. The scale yields seven value domains, which are classified into two dimensions: one of intrinsic values (self-acceptance, affiliation, community feeling, and physical fitness), and one of extrinsic values (social recognition, appealing appearance, and financial success). The intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions were calculated by averaging scores across all domains for each dimension.
2. *Kohn Parent Values* (Kohn, 1977). Male and female caregivers rank ordered 13 items according to how much they valued them in their child. Kohn (1977) reported that eight of

the values distinguished between valuing self-direction as opposed to conformity. Self-direction values included being interested, responsible, and considerate. Conformity values included having good manners, being obedient, neat, and clean, and acting in accordance with gender-typed behavioral norms. Higher scores indicate that the caregiver values self-direction more than conformity in their child.

Class Teachers

Child Behavior Rating Scale. Class teachers completed eight behavior ratings for each child, according to the extent to which the statements given described the child. This was scored using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = “*Not At All*” to 5 = “*Very Much*”). Four of the ratings were positively valenced (e.g., “*He / she is considerate of others*”) and four were negatively valenced (e.g., “*He / she is sometimes disruptive*”). Exploratory principal components analysis revealed a clear single-component, bipolar solution. The four positive items loaded on the component greater than .89, and the four negative items loaded on the component greater than -.82. We reverse scored the negative items and summed the scores to create a summary “Child Behavior Rating” score ($\alpha = .96$). A higher score indicates greater prosocial behavior being displayed by the child.

Procedure

Data were collected from the children in the course of their classroom activities. The class teacher introduced the study, and explained what the children needed to do. During the questionnaire completion, the class teacher and two researchers circulated amongst the children to answer any questions and to ensure that they understood the study instructions. The class

teacher and the researchers were careful not to influence the children's responses, but only to ensure that the children understood how to complete the questionnaires.

Questionnaire packets, together with a covering letter, were sent home to parents and caregivers by the school, with parents being asked to complete and return them by a specified date. The seven class teachers completed the Child Behavior Rating Scale in respect of each of the children in their class. They did not complete any other measures.

Data Analyses

Linear and multiple regression analyses were used to assess the prediction of children's intrinsic and extrinsic values from the eight potential sources of value internalization examined in this study. These eight sources of value internalization were: 1) internalized male caregiver values; 2) internalized female caregiver values; 3) hero's perceived values; 4) best friend's values; 5) male caregiver values; 6) female caregiver values; 7) male caregiver parenting values; and 8) female caregiver parenting values. Correlation analyses were used to test for associations between children's intrinsic and extrinsic values, child behavior ratings, and well-being.

Results

Children's Intrinsic and Extrinsic Values: Associations with Behavior and Well-being

The correlations between children's intrinsic and extrinsic values, and indicators of behavior and well-being, are presented in Table 2. Intrinsic values positively correlated with life satisfaction and happiness, whereas extrinsic values negatively correlated with behavior ratings. Anxiety negatively correlated with both life satisfaction and happiness.

- Insert Table 2 about here -

Differential Effects of Sources of Value Internalization

To assess the prediction of the child's intrinsic and extrinsic values from the eight sources of internalization included in this study, we conducted linear regression analyses for each of the sources of internalization on intrinsic and extrinsic values in turn (see Table 3). Results demonstrated that children's intrinsic values were significantly predicted from the intrinsic values internalized from their male, $\beta = .42$, $t(217) = 6.63$, $p < .001$, and female, $\beta = .51$, $t(217) = 8.61$, $p < .001$, caregivers, and their hero's perceived intrinsic values, $\beta = .39$, $t(217) = 6.08$, $p < .001$. There were also non-significant trends for children's intrinsic values to be predicted from their best friend's intrinsic values, $\beta = .14$, $t(217) = 1.66$, $p < .10$, and the intrinsic values of their male caregiver, $\beta = .27$, $t(217) = 1.77$, $p < .10$. Children's intrinsic values were not predicted from their female caregiver's intrinsic values, or their male or female caregiver's parental values (see Table 3).

- Insert Table 3 about here -

Children's extrinsic values were significantly predicted from the extrinsic values internalized from their male, $\beta = .65$, $t(217) = 12.15$, $p < .001$ and female, $\beta = .63$, $t(217) = 11.77$, $p < .001$, caregivers, their hero's perceived extrinsic values, $\beta = .55$, $t(217) = 9.39$, $p < .001$, and their best friend's extrinsic values, $\beta = .31$, $t(217) = 4.00$, $p < .001$. There was also a non-significant trend for male caregivers valuing of self-direction over conformity to be associated with less extrinsic valuing in their children, $\beta = -.27$, $t(217) = -1.88$, $p < .10$. Children's extrinsic values were not predicted from their male or female caregiver's extrinsic values, or their female caregiver's parental values (see Table 3).

- Insert Table 4 about here -

To assess the differential contributions of these sources of value internalization on children's intrinsic and extrinsic values, we conducted multiple regression analyses with simultaneous entry of the predictor variables that were significant from the linear regression analyses (see Table 4). Internalized values for both male, $\beta = .16$, $t(217) = 2.16$, $p < .05$, and female, $\beta = .31$, $t(217) = 3.77$, $p < .001$, caregivers, and hero's perceived values, $\beta = .22$, $t(217) = 3.28$, $p < .001$, all significantly predicted children's intrinsic values.

Internalized values for both male, $\beta = .27$, $t(217) = 2.70$, $p < .05$, and female, $\beta = .35$, $t(217) = 3.45$, $p < .001$, caregivers, and hero's perceived values, $\beta = .22$, $t(217) = 3.24$, $p < .01$, significantly predicted children's extrinsic values, however, the child's best friend's extrinsic values were non-significant in this analysis (see Table 4).

Discussion

As hypothesized, results of this study revealed that children's intrinsic values were associated with greater life satisfaction and happiness, whereas children's extrinsic values were associated with lower behavior ratings made by the class teacher, indicating that children with greater extrinsic values were more likely to be perceived as evidencing negative behaviors. These findings are in accordance with previous research which has demonstrated a positive relationship between intrinsic values, and a negative relationship between extrinsic values, and well-being among children and adolescents (e.g., Casas et al., 2004; Kasser & Ryan, 1993). Specifically, linear regression analyses showed that children's intrinsic values were predicted from the intrinsic values internalized from their male and female caregivers, and their hero's perceived intrinsic values. However, children's intrinsic values were not predicted from their female caregiver's intrinsic values, or their male or female caregiver's parental values. These

results suggest that children's intrinsic values are influenced most by those values they believe that their caregivers and hero would want them to possess, than the actual values of their caregiver or the values that they desire their children to possess. Children's extrinsic values were predicted from the extrinsic values internalized from their male and female caregivers, their hero's perceived extrinsic values, and their best friend's extrinsic values. However, children's extrinsic values were not predicted from their male or female caregiver's extrinsic values, or their female caregiver's parental values. Therefore, similar to intrinsic values, children's extrinsic values are influenced most by those values they believe that their caregivers and hero would want them to possess, than the actual values of their caregiver or the values that they desire their children to possess. In addition, contrary to intrinsic values, children's extrinsic values are predicted from their best friend's extrinsic values, indicating that children are more likely (i.e., influenced) to value extrinsic aspirations (e.g., money, power, image) if their best friend values extrinsic aspirations. These findings support previous research which has focused on the role of parents and caregivers as the primary source from which children acquire and internalize their values (e.g., Grusec, 1997), and research which demonstrates that with the onset of pubertal maturation adolescents' closeness to parents decreases and emotional autonomy, affiliation with, and the influence of peers increases (e.g., Nickerson & Nagle, 2004; Steinberg, 1987).

To assess the differential contributions of these sources of value internalization on children's intrinsic and extrinsic values, multiple regression analyses were conducted. As hypothesized, results revealed that internalized values for both male and female caregiver's values predicted both children's intrinsic and extrinsic values. Further, results revealed that internalized hero's perceived values predicted both children's intrinsic and extrinsic values.

These results demonstrate that the acquisition of intrinsic and extrinsic values among children primarily results from the internalized values of their caregiver and their hero's perceived values.

Although the findings of this study make a contribution to the literature in this area, to date there remains a dearth of research examining acquisition of intrinsic and extrinsic values among children. Several limitations of this study are noteworthy. First, additional research is required in order to confirm the psychometric properties of the Children's Aspiration Index adapted for use in this study in order to support the preliminary findings. Second, further research is required in order to determine the validity of the Hero's Perceived Values, Internalized Male/Female Caregiver Values, and Child Behavior Rating Scale created for the purposes of this research. Finally, this study was cross-sectional and future research examining the acquisition of intrinsic and extrinsic values among children would greatly benefit from a longitudinal examination of the impact of diverse variables that may be affecting the internalization of values, but in these early stages of research in this area, the current paper provides important directions for future consideration from a longitudinal perspective.

In general, findings of this study indicate that the acquisition of intrinsic and extrinsic values among children is most influenced by the internalized values of their caregivers and the values they believe their hero would want them to possess. Further, results of this study add to previous findings that have highlighted the influence of peers on adolescent behavior, and suggest that friends meaningfully influence children's extrinsic values. In times of increasing concern about character amongst children and youth, greater understanding of the factors that influence children's acquisition of intrinsic and extrinsic values may allow a deeper understanding of the broader societal influences on children, and what can be done about them. We hope the current paper makes a positive contribution in this direction.

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Appendix I

The Children's Happiness Scale

A number of statements that children have made to describe how they feel are given below. Please read each one and circle the letter which best describes how often you have felt that way in the past 7 days, including today.

N = Never R = Rarely S = Sometimes O = Often

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I felt cheerful | N | R | S | O |
| 2. I felt satisfied with my life | N | R | S | O |
| 3. I felt happy | N | R | S | O |
| 4. I felt pleased with the way I am | N | R | S | O |
| 5. I felt that life was enjoyable | N | R | S | O |

Tables

Table 1

Principal Components Analysis of the Children's Aspiration Index

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
2. Lots of people know who you are	.59	.00
3. You have lots of expensive things	.69	-.20
8. You are very fashionable	.80	.00
9. You have lots of money	.75	.00
13. People say that you look good	.77	.17
15. You are famous	.72	.00
18. You are rich	.75	-.14
19. You do something that makes you famous	.70	.17
21. People say that you are attractive	.78	.15
1. You are healthy	.00	.58
4. You give to charity	-.15	.57
7. You have good friends	.21	.41
10. You spend time with the people you love	.00	.42
12. You have lots of energy	.28	.43
14. You make the world a better place	.00	.65
16. You have fun with people	.18	.51
17. You like yourself as you are	.00	.44
20. You help other people	-.15	.78
5. <i>You are very fit</i>		
6. <i>You make your own choices</i>		
11. <i>You really know yourself well</i>		

Note: The analysis was constrained to a higher-order two-factor solution based on previous theory and research. Items were allocated to factors if they loaded greater than .4 on the factor, and less than .3 on the other factor. Items in italics were not retained in the final version. Item numbers refer to position in the original measure.

Table 2

Correlations Between Children's Intrinsic and Extrinsic Values, Behavior Ratings, and Well-being

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Intrinsic Values	-					
2. Extrinsic Values	.09	-				
3. Behavior Ratings	-.13	-.23***	-			
4. Life Satisfaction	.18**	.06	.09	-		
5. Happiness	.23***	-.07	.02	.48***	-	
6. Anxiety	.01	.04	-.11	-.27***	-.32***	-

Note: Values given are Pearson's r . ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3

*Linear Regression of Children's Intrinsic and Extrinsic Values on Sources of Value**Internalization*

Source of Internalization	<i>B</i>	<i>SE (B)</i>	β	<i>t</i>
<i>Intrinsic Values:</i>				
Internalized Male Caregiver Values	.82	.12	.42	6.63***
Internalized Female Caregiver Values	1.19	.14	.51	8.61***
Hero's Perceived Values	.78	.13	.39	6.08***
Best Friend's Values	.14	.09	.14	1.66^
Male Caregiver AI Intrinsic	.13	.08	.27	1.77^
Female Caregiver AI Intrinsic	.13	.08	.23	1.64
Kohn Parental Values (Male)	.00	.07	.14	.94
Kohn Parental Values (Female)	.00	.06	-.15	-1.11

Extrinsic Values:

Internalized Male Caregiver Values	1.92	.16	.65	12.15***
Internalized Female Caregiver Values	1.78	.15	.63	11.77***
Hero's Perceived Values	1.18	.13	.55	9.39***
Best Friend's Values	.32	.08	.31	4.00***
Male Caregiver AI Extrinsic	.12	.10	.18	1.20
Female Caregiver AI Extrinsic	.00	.09	.09	.64
Kohn Parental Values (Male)	-.18	.10	-.27	-1.88^
Kohn Parental Values (Female)	.00	.09	-.04	-.25

Note: Each variable was entered individually to predict the child's values. AI = Aspiration Index. ^ $p < .10$, *** $p < .001$

Table 4

*Multiple Regression of Children's Intrinsic and Extrinsic Values on Sources of Value**Internalization*

Source of Internalization	<i>B</i>	<i>SE (B)</i>	β	<i>t</i>
<i>Intrinsic Values:</i>				
Internalized Male Caregiver Values	.32	.15	.16	2.16*
Internalized Female Caregiver Values	.72	.19	.31	3.77***
Hero's Perceived Values	.43	.13	.22	3.28***
<i>Extrinsic Values:</i>				
Internalized Male Caregiver Values	.79	.29	.27	2.70**
Internalized Female Caregiver Values	.98	.28	.35	3.45***
Hero's Perceived Values	.48	.15	.22	3.24**
Best Friend's Values	.00	.06	.09	1.39

Note: Variables were entered simultaneously to predict the child's values. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$