29. Children's materialism and identity development
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Identity formation is a crucial part of child development. Children attempt at a very early age to understand their place in the world as unique individuals. With age, children develop social-cognitive skills that allow them to understand that they have thoughts that are different from those of other children (theory of mind; Wellman et al. 2001). This skill allows children to understand that they are different from others on many dimensions, including what they aspire to, and what they believe is important. This understanding forms the basis of identity development, as children begin to understand that there are numerous ways to communicate what they value, as well as who they are and who they are not. Examples include what they say (their attitudes and beliefs), what they do (their behaviors), with whom they affiliate (their social circle), and through their possessions (as both self-signals and other-signals).

In this chapter, we adopt Reed et al.'s (2012) conceptualization of identity as salient category labels with which a person self-identifies, and we refer to the consistent overemphasis on using the cultural and symbolic values of possessions as a non-verbal means of signaling a desirable identity to the self and others as "materialism." Although most definitions of materialism do not specifically link identity and materialism, recent conceptualizations make this link explicit. For example, Shrum et al. (2013, p. 1180) have defined materialism as "the extent to which individuals attempt to engage in the construction and maintenance of the self through the acquisition and use of products, services, experiences, or relationships that are perceived to provide desirable symbolic value."

There are two key components of this definition that form the basis of this chapter, and directly link identity and materialism. The first pertains to the construction and maintenance of the self (identity); the second is the

emphasis on symbolic value that possessions provide. Unlike words and deeds, which are relatively direct indicators of identity, possessions foster identity construction and maintenance through their culturally shared symbolic meaning. This definition also considers behaviors as indicators of materialism, and specifically the extent to which they reflect identities, and thus the definition departs from other conceptualizations that view materialism as a personal value system or even an identity itself (Kasser 2002; Richins and Dawson 1992).

In this chapter, we group the discussion of how materialism develops and the role identity plays in terms of socialization and psychological factors that influence materialism. Socialization factors include parents, peers and media. Psychological factors focus on fundamental identity motives such as self-esteem, power and belongingness (Vignoles et al. 2006; Williams 2007). Although socialization and psychological factors have independent effects on the development of identity and materialism, socialization factors also impact the psychological factors. In particular, we discuss what factors make particular aspects of identity salient, and how identity salience influences identity-relevant consumption (what Reed et al. 2012 term the "identity salience principle" and the "identity relevance principle," respectively). We conclude with recommendations for future research, identifying potentially fruitful research gaps.

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND MATERIALISM

Understanding the root causes of a phenomenon provides a framework for reducing the phenomenon's negative effects and enhancing the phenomenon's positive effects. For materialism, the perspective has been almost exclusively one that considers outcomes to be negative (cf. Belk 1985; Kasser 2002; Richins and Dawson 1992), although recent research has taken a more open-minded perspective (Pieters 2013; Shrum et al. 2013, 2014). In fact, research on the antecedents of materialism is voluminous, and an exhaustive review of this research is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, the factors that have received the most attention are family and parental influence, peer influence, media, identity and insecurity (Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002; Kasser et al. 2004). We have grouped these into socialization and psychological factors.

Socialization Factors

Socialization refers to the process of learning the norms, values and behaviors considered appropriate in one's social environment, allowing

individuals to become successful societal members (Mortimer and Simmons 1978). Within the broader construct of socialization, consumer socialization is the process of applying this knowledge to consumer situations (Ward 1974). Consumer socialization involves the acquisition of consumer-related values and beliefs, of which materialism is a central component (John 1999). There are different vehicles for consumer knowledge transmission (social influences), and the most important ones for children are parents, peers and media.

Parental influence

Parental influence begins at birth and thus represents the first powerful social influence, compared to peers and media, which come later. Children's values, attitudes and beliefs are at least in part developed by simple observation of parents and siblings, and thus materialistic parents tend to have materialistic children (Chaplin and John 2010; Goldberg et al. 2003). In addition, certain parenting styles influence children's adoption of materialistic values. Cold and controlling parents may cause children to adopt extrinsic goals such as material success and acquisition (Kasser et al. 1995). Similarly, material parenting (using material goods to express love or shape children's behavior; rewarding/punishing children using material goods) has an effect on later adulthood materialism (Richins and Chaplin 2015). Adults who grew up experiencing material parenting are more materialistic than their counterparts who did not. Adults who were rewarded with material objects as children are more likely to reward themselves the same way as adults, and also more likely to judge a person's success based on what the person owns. In contrast, parenting styles characterized as democratic and warm are associated with children motivated by intrinsic goals such as community values and affiliation (Kasser et al. 2004). Supportive parents have children who are less materialistic (Gentina et al. 2018b), and this effect is mediated by self-esteem (Chaplin and John 2010).

In addition to such direct influences, parental influence also occurs indirectly through family circumstances. Children who grow up in deprived environments may adopt particular values and beliefs as a means of coping. One example of deprivation is an unstable family environment. Children who come from disrupted families (for example, divorced/separated parents) display stronger materialistic values as adults, and are more likely to associate possessions with happiness, than do children from intact families (Roberts et al. 2003). Disrupted family environments are highly stressful, and children may seek refuge in material goods to distract from their stress and to compensate for lack of parental attention and warmth.

General economic deprivation is also related to the development of materialism in children. Adolescents from lower socio-economic (SES)

backgrounds are more materialistic than their affluent counterparts (Chaplin et al. 2014; Kasser et al. 1995), and low-SES children are more affected by branding and more likely to use possessions to fit into desired social groups and to maintain and project identities (Chaplin et al. 2014), compared to high-SES children. The relation between childhood SES and materialism can be explained in terms of life history theory, in which children growing up in resource-deprived environments adopt "fast" life strategies that are associated with greater impulsivity (for a review, see Durante and Griskevicius 2018). The negative relation between SES and materialism is also observed at a macro level. Children from generations growing up under adverse economic conditions are more materialistic than children from generations growing up under favorable conditions, and poorer countries tend to be more materialistic than richer countries (Kasser et al. 2004).

Peer influence

Peers are also a strong social influence, and heavily impact the consumption values of others. Peer influence is stronger for children who consider their friends as role models of appropriate consumption behavior (Churchill and Moschis 1979). In particular, being cool is paramount (Belk 2015), and coolness and popularity are associated with brands and possessions for children (Banerjee and Dittmar 2008; Belk 2015; Chaplin and Lowrey 2010). Peer influence on the development of materialistic values is particularly strong for children who have low self-esteem (Achenreiner 1997; Jiang et al. 2015). Peers are important social influences because they provide psychological support (Chaplin and John 2007, 2010), and greater peer support is associated with lower levels of materialism (Chaplin and John 2010; Gentina et al. 2018b), whereas higher levels of consumption-related peer pressure are associated with higher levels of materialism (Banerjee and Dittmar 2008; Jiang et al. 2015).

Media influence

Media influence identity construction in two interrelated ways. First, both advertising and entertainment media (movies) tell stories about people, in particular people's relations with possessions. Possessions are an important component of identity – what Belk (1988, p. 139) refers to as the "extended self" – and the portrayals of characters are typically idealized, at least in terms of heroes and aspirational groups (O'Guinn and Shrum 1997). Thus, advertising and entertainment characters portray identities that viewers want to emulate, and possessions are directly (advertising) or indirectly (entertainment) linked with these aspirational identities (Shrum 2012).

Another way in which media influence identity construction is by

impacting normative perceptions (O'Guinn and Shrum 1997). Apart from ideal portrayals, both advertising and television portray characters that fit societal norms; at least, norms consistent with the current dominant world view (Gerbner and Gross 1976). Combined with portrayals of aspirational identities, perceptions of normativeness reinforce the media message. Thus, with respect to the relation between people and their possessions, viewers come to believe that possessions are useful for identity construction and maintenance, and that they are essential and normal (Shrum et al. 2011).

The idealized, normative portrayals that advertising and entertainment provide lead to straightforward predictions that consumption of these media is correlated with the development of material values. Because advertisements glorify products, promise happiness and link products with success, then the more one views advertising, the more likely one is to develop materialistic values. For example, exposure to advertising is correlated with materialism in children (Chan and Prendergast 2007). Similarly, attention to and interest in advertising is positively correlated with materialism in children (Goldberg et al. 2003), and exposure to advertising is positively correlated with desire for food and toys (Smith and Atkin 2003). Preschool children exposed to advertising prefer material objects over more socially oriented activities such as playing with friends (Goldberg and Gorn 1978).

Viewing of the programs between the ads is also positively correlated with materialism in children (Chan and Prendergast 2007). This finding is consistent with the predictions of cultivation theory (Gerbner and Gross 1976), which suggests that the materialistic content of programs can cultivate material values, such as desire for luxury products (Shrum 1999; Shrum et al. 2005). Similarly, electronic media usage is also positively associated with materialism (Kamal et al. 2013; Rai et al. 2018).

Psychological Factors

In this subsection, we focus on internal, psychological factors that form the core of identity. These factors are variously referred to as identity motives (Vignoles et al. 2006), fundamental motives (Kenrick et al. 2010) and fundamental human needs (Williams 2007). In particular, we focus on three identity motives that have received considerable attention in materialism research – self-esteem, power and need to belong – and we review research that links these fundamental aspects of identity to materialism.

Material possessions are closely linked to identity (Belk 1988; Rustagi and Shrum 2017), and people often use possessions to signal to others important aspects of themselves (Berger and Heath 2007). This is particularly true when individuals experience threats to their identities. In such

cases, they attempt to bolster or repair their damaged identity, and one way is through consumption (Braun and Wickland 1989). Rucker and Galinsky (2013) and Mandel et al. (2017) refer to this process as "compensatory consumption."

Both chronic and situational deficits in each core aspect of the self are associated with materialism. Deficits are self-discrepancies or gaps between the actual and the ideal self (Higgins 1989). Chronic deficits are specific to individuals and represent stable individual differences. For example, some people may have chronically low self-esteem, general feelings of powerlessness, or feelings of social isolation or loneliness. Situational deficits are not specific to individuals, but are specific to instances that occur in daily life. That is, regardless of dispositional levels of self-esteem, power or belongingness, individuals may experience momentary threats to core aspects of their identity (for example, being rejected from a group).

Self-esteem
Self-esteem refers to how people feel about themselves, and their general feelings of self-worth (Baumeister 1998), and deficits in self-esteem may motivate people to try to repair their self-esteem through symbolic signaling. Indeed, higher levels of materialism are associated with chronically lower self-esteem in adults (Richins and Dawson 1992). Similar findings have been observed for situational threats to self-esteem (Lee and Shrum 2012; Lee et al. 2017).

Early adolescence is a time of particularly heightened insecurity because children become more socially aware while also becoming more self-critical (Chaplin and John 2007). Therefore, fitting in with peers by having the right brands and possessions is important. Adolescence typically brings more identity-relevant brands and other material possessions that could be used for identity-signaling into a young person's life (for example, phones, cars, iPads, laptops, gaming systems) (Reed et al. 2012). Although older adolescents' identities are likely to be much more developed relative to younger adolescents, they still rely on material possessions to navigate their social worlds (for example, to signal in-group membership to self and others, to impress friends).

Consistent with this reasoning, higher levels of materialism are associated with lower self-esteem in children and adolescents. For example, Chaplin and John (2007, Study 1) linked insecurity to materialism in children 8–18 years old. They documented the natural development of self-esteem in children, with insecurity heightening during early adolescence then lessening by late adolescence, and found that materialism levels moved inversely with this self-esteem trend. Moreover, lack of parental or peer support can lower self-esteem, which can explain the negative relation

between parental and peer support and materialism reviewed earlier. In a study with 984 French adolescents (ages 13–18), both lack of parental support and lack of peer support were associated with lower levels of self-esteem, which in turn was associated with higher levels of materialism (Gentina et al. 2018b). Similar findings were reported by Chaplin and John (2010) with American adolescents.

There is also evidence of situational effects of self-esteem on materialism. Chaplin and John (2007, Study 2) experimentally boosted self-esteem for the same three age groups and assessed its effect on children's materialism. Boosting self-esteem significantly reduced materialism for all three age groups, and this reduction was strongest for the middle age group, which exhibited the lowest levels of self-esteem. These findings provide strong causal evidence of the effect of self-esteem on materialism, evidence that is lacking in correlational studies.

Power

Power refers to the extent to which individuals feel they have control over their lives and possess interpersonal influence (Anderson and Galinsky 2006; Keltner et al. 2003), and individuals who are chronically low on feelings of power are more materialistic (Kashdan and Breen 2007). Situational threats to power also impact materialistic behaviors. For example, when individuals' feelings of power and control were threatened, they engaged in more conspicuous consumption (Lee and Shrum 2012; Lee et al. 2017; Rucker and Galinsky 2008) and were willing to pay more for high-status products (Rustagi and Shrum 2019) compared to non-threatened individuals.

Despite clear links between power and materialism in adults, surprisingly little research has investigated this relation with children. One exception is the Gentina et al. (2018b) study discussed earlier. That study also documented the negative relation between feelings of personal power and materialism, consistent with the findings with adults. Moreover, as with self-esteem, power mediated the relation between parental and peer support materialism: higher levels of parental and peer support led to greater feelings of power, which in turn were associated with lower levels of materialism.

Need to belong

Humans have a fundamental need to belong (Baumeister and Leary 1995). Developing and maintaining relationships likely have survival benefits associated with mutual protection and sharing of resources (Buss 1990). Belonging is particularly important for adolescents, because they undergo important transitions. For example, the transition from elementary to high

school can be challenging for adolescents because often they must develop entirely new social relationships as well as manage existing ones (Chaplin and John 2010). Adolescents may no longer be able to rely solely on their existing social networks, which may foster feelings of loneliness and exclusion (Oswald and Clark 2003). Thus, when children feel they do not belong, or are not wanted as part of a group, they attempt to alleviate this aversive state, and one of the ways they can do this is through possessions. Indeed, peer pressure to have the right possessions (clothes, and so on) is associated with materialism (Banerjee and Dittmar 2008). Similarly, peer rejection is associated with higher levels of materialism (Dittmar 2008).

Lack of feelings of belongingness can cause children and adolescents to feel lonely, which also impacts materialism. For example, in a study of Chinese adolescents, loneliness was found to be positively associated with materialism (Fangjing 2017). That research also demonstrated the mediating role of psychological factors (in this case, loneliness) in the relation between parental support and materialism. Gentina et al. (2018a) reported similar findings regarding the relation between loneliness and materialism. In a study with French adolescents, they found that loneliness was correlated with materialism. However, the type of materialism fostered by loneliness depended on the strategies that adolescents adopted to cope with loneliness. Adolescents adopt both passive strategies (for example, through distraction, avoiding social contact) and active strategies (for example, cultivating more social relationships, being more aware of others) to cope with loneliness. The use of passive coping strategies was associated with higher levels of materialism through product acquisition, whereas the use of active coping strategies was associated with higher levels of materialism through sharing of possessions. Importantly, passive coping through product acquisition materialism was associated with lower well-being, whereas active coping through sharing materialism was associated with higher well-being.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Material possessions make children and adolescents happy, and are used for self-development (Chaplin and John 2007, 2010; Connell and Schau 2012; Kasser 2002), all critical elements to healthy development through-out childhood. What is unclear, however, is when and how children's desire for material goods turns from being useful for healthy identity development to being potentially very harmful. Research linking material-ism and decreased prosocial behavior (for example, generosity) in children is beginning to surface (Chaplin et al. 2018a), but more work is needed to

fully understand the utility of using material possessions to achieve desired end goals, including identity development.

Although most research with children has focused on the importance of material goods in children's lives (Chaplin et al. 2018b; Chaplin and John 2007, 2010; Chaplin et al. 2014; Goldberg et al. 2003; Kasser 2002), experiences can also be materialistic when they are used to signal social status and popularity (for example, going to an Ed Sheeran concert, vacationing in Europe; Shrum et al. 2013). Thus, a useful research direction is to understand when, how and why experiences become part of children's identities. Recent research shows that younger children value possessions over experiences, but this preference gradually changes throughout childhood, culminating in a tendency to prefer experiences over possessions during adolescence (Chaplin et al. 2018b), similar to adults' preferences (Van Boven and Gilovich 2003).

Moving forward, it would be fruitful to better understand when children begin to use experiences for identity signaling (for example, deriving happiness from experiences because they signal social status, popularity), and to examine whether experience-focused materialism is associated with the same negative outcomes that have been linked to possession-focused materialism, such as decreased generosity (Chaplin et al. 2018a) and increased risky behaviors (Gentina et al. 2018a). The challenge for researchers is to develop more comprehensive and sensitive measures of happiness that capture both short- and long-term happiness, and to measure both momentary enjoyment as well as deeper meanings of happiness and self-brand connections derived from possessions versus experiences.

Gratitude is another understudied area. Grateful children are more generous and connected to their neighborhoods and communities, have happier relationships with their family and friends, and are more self-disciplined (Froh and Bono 2014). Gratitude is also associated with lower levels of materialism and risky behaviors. For example, Chaplin et al. (2018a) use values theory (Bilsky and Schwartz 1994) to argue for gratitude as a possible antidote for materialism. According to this theoretical framework, values are desirable, trans-situational goals that help to guide people's behaviors. However, some values are incompatible with each other, and actions to fulfill one may conflict with actions to pursue another. One of the major conflicts is between orientations of self-enhancement (pursuing success and dominance over others) and self-transcendence (accepting others as equals and being concerned for their welfare) (Bilsky and Schwartz 1994). Materialism is an example of a self-enhancement value, whereas gratitude is an example of a self-transcendent value (Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002). Therefore, values theory suggests a negative correlation between gratitude and materialism, because they represent opposing

value systems. Chaplin et al. (2018a) show that an intervention designed to encourage feelings of gratitude among adolescents (keeping a gratitude journal) decreases materialistic tendencies and increases generosity toward those in need. Their findings provide help to parents, educators and policy-makers by redirecting attention to the importance of taking a more proactive approach and looking for ways to instill gratitude both at home and at school.

Another area for future research is prospection, which is defined as the "ability to 'pre-experience' the future by simulating it in our minds" (Gilbert and Wilson 2007, p. 1352). Simulations of the future allow people to "preview" events and to "pre-feel" the pleasures and pains those events will produce. There are a number of benefits to acting with the future in mind (Suddendorf and Busby 2005). Of particular importance to identity, prospection benefits the self by aiding rational decision-making and self-control (Seligman et al. 2013), skills that are critical to keeping children's impulsive tendencies toward materialism under control. Prospection can also help children and adolescents to cope with a variety of consumption scenarios, such as anticipating behaviors that will bring short-lived superficial peer acceptance versus long-term genuine peer acceptance. Prospection can be especially beneficial to adolescents, who often succumb to peer pressure because they let the past and present guide their present thinking (for example, "Many kids in school are wearing the newest Steph Curry sneakers so I need a pair"). What if the teenager simulated the future and could see that his current friends would not like him any less if he never got the new Steph Curry sneakers?

Children are not good at being future-minded (Atance and Meltzoff 2006), which may explain why adolescents appear to be so materialistic and engage in risky behaviors. Because marketing messages encourage immediate gratification, the ability to act with the future in mind may allow children to have more self-control over their desire to buy. Although children have difficulty prospecting (Atance and Meltzoff 2006; Russell et al. 2010), we have little knowledge of how to help children improve their prospection abilities. Thus, future research should investigate how prospection develops throughout childhood, and document the extent to which prospection can improve the ability to plan for a range of events and emotions across a range of consumer contexts (for example, the excitement that comes with purchasing a new toy versus the possibility that the toy will not be as fun to play with as was portrayed on TV). As is the case with other potential future research studies discussed in this chapter, the development of more engaging measures suitable for children is needed before researchers can move forward with hypothesis testing.

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