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The purpose of this study was to extend the understanding of contextual factors that are associated with children's motivational development in early childhood. The study examined the relations between family social class, maternal values of self-direction and conformity, and child persistence in accomplishing a challenging task, which was conceptualized as one of the component processes of motivation. Two hundred thirty one mothers and their 3.5-year-old children participated in the study. Consistent with Kohn's (1979) theoretical perspective, the findings indicated that middle-class mothers valued self-direction in their children more and conformity less than mothers of the working class. Children of mothers who valued self-direction more than conformity showed higher levels of persistence. The study also tested a model in which maternal values served as a mediator between family social class and child persistence. No direct association between family social class and child persistence was found, thus the mediational model was not supported. Implications for developmental programs and directions for future research are stated.

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN SOCIAL CLASS, MATERNAL
VALUES OF SELF-DIRECTION AND CONFORMITY,
AND CHILD PERSISTENCE

by

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To my niece Alisa and my parents

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Parental Values of Self-Direction and Conformity

One of the cornerstone questions of developmental science, stated simply, is the relationship between family socio-economic status (SES) and child outcome. Research results show that children from higher SES families generally fare better than children from lower SES in many domains, especially cognitive development and school achievement (Booth & Dunn, 1996; Davis & Ginsburg, 1993).

Frequently, SES is included in research models as a proxy for a spectrum of processes that form family life style. Besides educational level, occupation, income, and other correlated variables, SES also captures “the intricate interplay of all these variables [that] create different basic conditions of life at different levels of social order” (Kohn, 1963, p. 471). Members of different SES families (or social class families, using Kohn’s terminology) experience different conditions of life in terms of financial wealth and stability, standards of living, educational attainment, and prestige; as a result, they form different views of social reality and acquire different hopes, aspirations and ideas about what is important and desirable in life. To Kohn, social class is defined as a group of individuals who hold similar education and occupational prestige. It is the level of education and associated with it occupation – manual versus non-manual – that become

the main separating variable between working and middle social classes and that explains differences in their perception of social reality and, therefore, of the desirable in life.

According to Kohn (1963), people's conception of what is important, or their values, influences what they see as desirable characteristics for their children to have, thus determining what people perceive as goals of parenting. Thus, differences in values, which originate in different experiences of social life encountered by members of working and middle classes, become the primary mechanism that explains the emergence of different parenting goals and strategies of middle- and working-class parents.

When examining parenting goals, it is important to acknowledge that the contrast between parents of different social classes may not be sharp and that there may be similarities in ways parents of working and middle classes raise their children. Differences in perception of social reality is only one of many aspects that can potentially influence the formation of what parents see as desirable characteristics for children to have. Ethnicity, religious beliefs, political views, cultural traditions, urbanization, and child gender also contribute to formation of parenting goals and perception of desirable characteristics (Kohn, 2006). These aspects of social life influence parental values, beliefs, practices, and overall parent-child relationships, thus contributing to heterogeneity within social classes, as defined by Kohn, as well as to the similarities between social classes. At times, using only SES as a predictor of children's outcomes may blur these between and within differences and similarities of social classes. As a result, significant differences in children's outcomes may be attributed to SES when in fact they may be associated with another predictor that correlates with SES. On the other

hand, having SES as a predictor variable may fail to explain particular differences in children's outcomes which could be explained by certain aspects of families' social lives if such relations were tested directly.

Kohn explicitly acknowledged the limitations of a clear-cut division between social classes. He focused, however, on differences in values of self-direction and conformity, values that have been shown to reliably differentiate between social classes across a few decades of research (Kohn, 1979; Kohn, 2006). Parents of both classes value characteristics such as honesty, respect for the rights of others, and positive demeanor, to name a few. However, working-class parents put greater emphasis on child obedience to imposed rules and standards, while middle-class parents are more attentive to the child's internal dynamics and emphasize curiosity, consideration, and self-control. Thus, Kohn concludes that in regard to compliance and self-direction, working-class parental values center around conformity to external prescriptions, and middle-class parental values center on children's abilities of self-direction and self-governance. Taking into consideration that other aspects of parents' social life influence parental values and beliefs about child rearing, it cannot be expected that conformity – self-direction values will be the only ones that influence parenting; therefore, only a modest relationship between social class and parental valuation of individual characteristics such as obedience and self-direction have been observed in previous research, usually not higher than 0.2 to 0.3 (Campbell, 1978; Kohn, 1976; Kohn & Schooler, 1973; Wright & Wright, 1976). What makes the class differences in these parental values so notable is their consistency, regardless of national, religious, ethnic, and regional differences.

Kohn explains such stability by the experiences parents encounter daily while functioning in society. Parental education and occupational prestige, the defining characteristics that separate the classes in the first place, prescribe different roles and sets of skills that people need to perform their jobs. Kohn distinguishes three aspects that separate middle-class occupations from working-class occupations. First, members of the middle class tend to deal with interpersonal relations, ideas, and symbols, while members of the working class tend to deal with manipulations of concrete objects. Second, middle-class occupations are usually subject to self-direction while working-class occupations are subject to set rules, standards, and direct supervision. Third, career growth and prosperity for middle-class occupations is more a result of one's own efforts and achievement, while prosperity in working-class occupations depends more upon collective actions (such as those of unions) and systems of promotion and pay increases established by management (Kohn, 1963; Kohn, 1979). There are certainly exceptions to such a classification, but it holds for the majority of occupations. Based on these differences, it is evident that occupations of middle class employees tend to promote self-direction and initiative, while working-class occupations tend to promote explicit adherence to the rules set by authority figures. The role of education in separating middle-class members from their working-class counterparts, besides the association between the highest level of schooling attained and occupational prestige, is important in its own right. The completion of a 4-year college degree usually requires self-discipline, self-organization, creativity, and ability to think for oneself, while the completion of high school or vocational school usually entails following teachers' instructions. It is,

therefore, precisely because of differences in their educational backgrounds, daily work experiences, and circumstances of daily life that parents of middle and working social classes come to value different characteristics in their children. Middle-class parents are more likely to value self-control and self-direction, and working-class parents are more likely to value conformity and obedience to externally imposed rules.

As a consequence of this difference for parent-child relationships and parenting practices, Kohn proposed that middle-class parents will be more supportive of their children's initiative, self-guidance and self-control, while working-class parents will be more restrictive and demanding that their children follow rules and regulations imposed on them by parents and other adults. Such parenting positions will ultimately result in differences in children's development.

Several studies based on Kohn's hypotheses (Luster, Rhoades, & Haas, 1989; Tudge et al., 1999; Tudge, Hogan, Snezhkova, Kulakova, & Etz, 2000) examined the extent to which parental values are associated with parenting practices and children's outcomes, particularly the differences in initiative expression and cognitive development. The empirical findings of these studies suggest that social class indicators (occupational prestige and educational level) are related to parental conformity – self-direction values and parental beliefs about whether being responsive to their child is beneficial for the child or can spoil the child, and whether restraints on children's exploratory behavior and strict discipline should be imposed. The results also suggest that parents who value self-direction tend to create more supportive home environments for their children and to be more involved with them.

There is ample evidence of a positive impact of supportive and involved parenting on different aspects of children's outcome (Grolnick & Apostoleris, 2002; Paulussen-Hoogeboom, Stams, Hermanns, & Peetsma, 2007; Tamis-LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb, 2004). Parental values and beliefs are also shown to be associated with the degree to which young children were engaged in cognitively stimulating activities, such as academic lessons, academic play, skill and nature lessons, and conversations with adults (Tudge et al., 1999). Looking more directly at self-direction, Tudge et al. found that three-year-old middle-class children were more likely than their working-class counterparts to initiate these activities. The results suggest that initiation of academically related activities serves as an indication that children interiorize their parents' values for self-direction, and this effect is observable at a young age.

From the standpoint of motivational development initiation in general and the initiation of goal-oriented behaviors in particular can be perceived as a part of any motivational process. As such, these results provide enough ground to suggest that other aspects of motivational behavior, for example, persistence in task solving or level of task engagement, may have similar associations with parental values of conformity and self-direction, as has been shown in the case of initiation.

Motivation

The body of literature currently available on the development of motivation provides a wide range of terms that may be appropriate to describe goal-oriented behaviors, such as achievement motivation, competence motivation, effectance motivation, and mastery motivation. There is also a wide range of conceptualizations of what motivation is and

what processes should be included in this construct. Motivation implies a tendency or desire to act on the will, and as a psychological concept it can be interpreted in different ways. Some researchers take a narrow focus on individual, self-defining accomplishments in school and sports, whereas others take a more inclusive approach that examines creativity, cognitive strategies, self-regulated learning, coping and disengagement, which support or impede a person's goal achievement (Elliot & Dweck, 2005). The inclusion of different component processes as ways to reflect the level of motivation inevitably leads to a lack of coherence in operationalization of the construct. The concept of motivation is presumed, although it is rarely stated explicitly, to tap into internal processes that are set off during activity involvement or goal achievement. As such, motivational processes cannot be observed directly and have to be inferred from a range of behavioral manifestations and other evidences of an individual's response to contextual events.

There is a consensus among motivational researchers that many questions concerning the contextual influences of motivational development are understudied (Elliot & Dweck, 2005; Pomerantz, Grolnick, & Price, 2005). The substantial body of work reflects familial associations with motivational development of infants and toddlers (for review, see Busch-Rossnagel, Knauf-Jensen, & DesRosiers, 1995). Research has been conducted on contextual effects, including family, teachers, and peers, on development of achievement motivation among school age children (for review, see Pomerantz et al, 2005). However, there is a considerable gap in the theoretical and empirical literature about motivational processes in preschool age children. At the same time, most

researchers agree that elementary school children have individual differences in terms of their motivational tendencies by the time they reach kindergarten and that these differences are an important part of school success. Children's academic achievement is perceived in our society as one of the key indicators of children's future success in life. Much educational and developmental literature is dedicated to the problems of academic accomplishment, including its biological, psychological, and contextual determinants. Children's motivation for academic achievement is identified as one of these determinants (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). It is important, therefore, to understand the reasons for individual differences in children's motivation development and processes that lead to these differences. Thus, research on development of motivation in early childhood can further contribute to our understanding of children's differences in motivation as they reach school age.

Undoubtedly, there are family processes that contribute to the development of motivation in early childhood. For example, empirical research on parental support for autonomy provides evidence that children of parents who support autonomy have higher levels of engagement in mastering their environments (Frodi et al., 1985; Kelly, Brownell, & Campbell, 2000), have higher levels of intrinsic motivation for school-related achievement (d'Ailly, 2003; Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993), and show higher levels of academic success when compared to children of more controlling parents (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). Thus, examining the associations between parental values of self-direction and conformity and achievement motivation in early childhood expands our knowledge about parental characteristics that support or hinder children's motivational development.

Traditionally, the behaviors that are referred to as achievement motivation in children of school age were studied in infants and toddlers under the name of mastery motivation (Harter, 1981). Mastery motivation was operationally defined as the amount of task-directed behavior infants and toddlers exhibited while manipulating toys that posed challenging problems (Yarrow, Morgan, Jennings, Harmon, & Gaiter, 1982). The persistence with which children were performing these task- and goal-directed behaviors is considered to be the most age-appropriate behavioral expression of motivational processes in early childhood (MacTurk & Morgan, 1995). Several motivational theorists have pointed to persistence and effort as the defining characteristics of motivational behavior in general (e.g., Atkinson, 1957; Harter, 1981; Yarrow et al., 1983), and measures of persistence are used to assess individual differences in motivation in young children (e.g., Dichter-Blancher, Busch-Rossnagel, & Knauf-Jensen, 1997; Messer, Rachford, McCarthy, & Yarrow, 1987). The tasks that are commonly used for such purposes are developmentally appropriate puzzles and shape-sorters. Following suit, the present study examined the level of children's motivation through their level of persistence with a developmentally appropriate shape-sorter, the pieces of which can be placed into a board or simply used as play materials.

Any association between parental characteristics and child outcomes cannot be understood without examining the processes through which these parental characteristics are linked to child development. It is not the purpose of the present study to examine possible processes through which parental values of self-direction and conformity influence children's motivational development. I would like to suggest, however, that the

process of children's interiorization of parental values, as described by Vygotsky (1986) and suggested by Tudge et al. (1999) about the association between activity initiation and parental values, may be one of the mechanisms through which the associations examined in the present study can occur. Proximal processes, outlined by Bronfenbrenner as an essential part of child development, (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), take place in daily interactions between parents and children and may serve as a vehicle for children's acceptance of parental ideas, thus explaining the influence of parental values on children's motivation. Another possible explanation of the associations between parental characteristics and child outcomes may be the bidirectional effects of parent-child relationships. Parents of children who possess certain traits such as assertiveness and capability may come to appreciate these characteristics of their children and be supportive of them. Another possibility is that these children, having met parental expectations of capability and assertiveness and having shown that they are competent in certain tasks, may be granted more autonomy from their parents, which in turn leads to increased capability and assertiveness (Bell, 1968). It is also plausible to assume that parents may affect their children's motivational development by providing them with social environments that match parental values. For example, parents may engage their children in activities with children of other parents who possess similar values, thus employing peer group socialization processes in order to socialize their children in a certain way. The particulars of "how" and "why" these associations happen are an important direction for future research that goes beyond the scope of the present report.

The hypotheses of the present study are that (1) parental values of self-direction and conformity are related to parents' social status such that middle class parents value self-direction in their children more and value conformity less than do working class parents; (2) parental values of conformity and self-direction across social classes are related to children's behavior in such a way that children of parents who value self-direction show higher levels of achievement motivation; and (3) parental values of self-direction and conformity mediate the link between parental social status and their children's level of achievement motivation.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Participants

The participants were 231 3.5-year-old children and their mothers participating in a larger longitudinal study that focuses on cognitive and socio-emotional development of young children. The dyads were recruited from day care centers and pre-schools in Guilford and Forsyth counties of North Carolina. The sample consists of representative numbers of Black (38%) and White (62%) families to reflect the demographic composition of the population of these counties.

Of 261 families participating in the larger study from which the data were drawn, 30 mother-child dyads were excluded from the current report for the following reasons: in 9 cases the motivational task was not administered, in 6 cases children had at home the toy that was used in the task, in 5 cases mothers were explicitly directing children how to complete the shape-sorter, and in 10 cases the parental values questionnaire was either completed incorrectly or not completed at all. The two groups (those included in the present study and those that were not) were compared using independent sample *t*-tests on all demographic variables. There were no significant differences between the two groups.

Procedure

Mother-child dyads were invited for a laboratory visit when focal children were

between 40 and 44 months of age. An experimenter ran a series of tasks with the child, while the mother remained in the room and completed a series of questionnaires. The total duration of each visit was approximately 2 hours. At the end of the visit children selected a prize from a treasure chest, and mothers received incentive payments.

Measures

Demographic information was obtained from the mother, and included information about child gender, race, parental education level and occupation (reported for both parents separately if a spouse or a partner were present at home), family composition, and income level. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the sample.

About half of the focal children were boys (47%). Of the 231 mothers, 144 self-identified as White, 81 as Black, and 6 as Biracial. Since there were only a few in the latter category, they were combined with the Black category to form the Non-White group.

Parental education was reported in terms of the highest level of education completed. Education and occupation of mothers or mothers and fathers (if a spouse or a partner were present at home) were used to calculate the Hollingshead Index of Social Status (Hollingshead, 1975). The possible scores range from 8 to 66, reflecting social status as a continuous variable. Following the theoretical perspective of this study that social classes encounter different experiences in their day-to-day life, the social status variable was used to create the middle class and the working class groups. The middle class group included all professional categories (the Index ratings 40 to 66), and the working class group included all non-professional categories (the Index ratings 8 to 39). A majority of

participants provided enough information to classify their occupation according to the Hollingshead Index of Social Status. However, there were 8 cases when such information was not provided; therefore, the classification of these families was conducted on the basis of the participants' highest education level attained. Thus, 1 family where mother completed a 4-year college degree was included in the middle class category, and 7 families where both mothers and fathers (if present at the home) did not complete a 4-year college degree were included in the working class category.

The demographic data were examined to determine the breakdown of race and class categories. 77% of White participants were classified as middle class and 23% as working class. Among Non-White families, 57% were classified as middle class and 43% as working class. Thus, racial and social class stratification, obtained in our sample, allows the examination of race and class issues separate from one another, without the threat of a confounding effect.

Table 1

Descriptive data of the study sample (N = 231)

	%
Gender (male)	47.2
Ethnicity	---
White	62.3
Non-White	37.7
Maternal education (4 years of College or more)	51.1
Maternal occupation (180 working)	---
Professionals and technicians	66.1
Clerical workers and manual workers	33.9
Paternal education (4 years of College or more)	52.1
Paternal occupation (182 working)	---
Professionals and technicians	64.3
Clerical workers and manual workers	35.7
Social Class*	---
Middle class	67.5
Working class	32.5
Income to Needs Ratio	---
<2	35.4
2-5	51.9
>5	12.7
Two Parent Families	81.0

*Note. Social Class is based on Hollingshead Index of Social Status

Parental values were assessed through the Parental Values Q-sort (Kohn & Schooler, 1973) that was transformed by our research team into a questionnaire (see Appendix A). Out of a list of 13 characteristics that are considered as desirable for all children, mothers were asked to choose three that were the most desirable for their children to have, and three that were the least important for them. The top three choices were not to coincide with the lower three choices, and out of the top three and the bottom three characteristics mothers had to choose the one most desirable, and the one least important. The 13 child characteristics included five self-direction features (e.g., “That he/she is interested in how and why things happen” or “That he/she has self-control”), four conformity features (e.g., “That he/she has good manners” or “That he/she obeys his/her parents well”), and four neutral features (e.g. “That he/she is honest”). The characteristic rated as the most desirable gets a score of 5, the next two most desirable choices get scores of 4; the one least important characteristic gets a score of 1, and the two next least important get scores of 2. Each of the remaining items, not chosen as either most desirable or the least important, receives a score of 3. The mean scores for the self-direction and conformity items are then calculated. The possible range of the mean scores for self-direction is 2.2 to 3.8, and for conformity is 2.0 to 4.0, with the higher mean score representing higher regard for child’s characteristics of self-direction and conformity.

This calculation method takes into consideration the possibility that any respondent may receive high (or low) scores on both self-direction and conformity values, although these constructs are often perceived as opposites of each other. The preliminary analysis determined that these two variables were significantly but not perfectly correlated ($r = -$

.65). Therefore, they may represent related but different values. Skinner, Johnson, and Snyder (2005) showed that certain psychological constructs that are often perceived as opposite sides of a bipolar dimension, for example, warmth and rejection, may in fact represent two related but different unipolar dimensions, especially if the correlation between them is not extremely high. Thus, maternal values of self-direction and conformity were treated as separate variables in the main analyses.

Child persistence was assessed during an observational task that lasted 4.5 minutes and was videotaped. A child was presented with a wooden shape-sorter in a form of a clock with 12 uniquely shaped slots, 18 wooden pieces of which 12 corresponded to the board slots and six were extra, and a jar containing the pieces. The child was instructed to play with these toys any way they wanted and the mother was asked not to help the child. The experimenter sat at the table facing away from the child and worked on the computer. Persistence is measured as time (in seconds) spent in task engagement at the high level (for the complete coding scheme, see Appendix B). Twenty percent of the videotapes were coded independently by two coders. Inter-rater agreement was calculated by correlating time spent in high engagement reported by both coders. Inter-rater agreement for the entire sample was $r = .96$.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary analyses were conducted to examine differences by child gender, race, and social class in the key study variables (values of self-direction and conformity, and child persistence) before testing the hypotheses. Descriptive information on the key study variables and *t* values are presented in Table 2. There were no significant group differences in terms of child persistence. There were, however, several significant group differences in maternal values of self-direction and conformity. The value of conformity was higher for girls than for boys. However, there was no gender difference in the value of self-direction, thus providing additional evidence that values of self-direction and conformity may be separate psychological constructs. Secondly, values of self-direction and conformity were significantly different for White and Non-White mothers and for middle class and working class mothers.

In order to distinguish the effect of class from the effects of race when testing proposed hypotheses, race was used as a control variable in the main analyses. Child gender was also used as a covariate due to the differences in maternal values of conformity for boys and girls.

Table 2

Group Mean Comparisons of the Study Variables

	Total sample	Boys	Girls	
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t</i>
Maternal Values				
Self-direction	3.14 (.33)	3.17 (.33)	3.11 (.34)	-1.37
Conformity	2.94 (.34)	2.88 (.33)	2.99 (.35)	2.49**
Persistence (in sec.)	166 (83)	174 (78)	159 (88)	-1.37
		White	Non-White	
		<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>t</i>
Maternal Values				
Self-direction		3.22 (.31)	2.99 (.33)	5.39***
Conformity		2.89 (.34)	3.05 (.34)	-3.60***
Persistence (in sec.)		172 (78)	153 (93)	1.69
		Middle Class	Working Class	
		<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t</i>
Maternal Values				
Self-direction		3.20 (.32)	2.97 (.33)	5.10***
Conformity		2.88 (.32)	3.08 (.35)	-4.34***
Persistence (in sec.)		167 (83)	160 (87)	.64

** p<.01, *** p<.001

Parental Social Class and Values of Self-Direction and Conformity

To address the hypothesis about the association between families' social class and maternal values, separate hierarchical multiple regression analyses were used to examine the values of self-direction and the values of conformity. Table 3 displays the results of the regression analyses. In the first step child gender and race were entered simultaneously as the control variables. Family social class was entered in the second step. Social class was significantly related to both self-direction and conformity values, accounting for 10% of variance in the model with values of self-direction as a dependent variable and for 8% of variance in the model with values of conformity. Thus, middle class mothers valued self-direction in their children more and valued conformity less than their working class counterparts.

Because the preliminary analyses showed that there were group differences in maternal values, the potential moderating effects of child gender and race (as interaction terms of gender and social class and of race and social class) were also tested in the third step of each regression analysis. None of the interaction terms were significant for either self-direction or conformity values; therefore, these results are not presented.

Table 3

Regression Analyses Examining the Relation Between Family Social Class and Maternal Values

	Values of Self-Direction					Values of Conformity				
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	ΔR^2	ΔF	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	ΔR^2	ΔF
Step 1	---	---	---	.11	14.1***	---	---	---	.07	8.3***
Child gender	.06	.04	.08			-.08	.04	-.12		
Ethnicity	.16	.04	.23***			-.11	.05	-.15*		
Step 2	---	---	---	.10	28.5***	---	---	---	.08	21.3***
Family social class	.01	.00	.32***			-.01	.00	-.29***		

Values of Self-Direction Adj. $R^2 = .19$, $F(3, 230) = 28.47$, $p < .001$

Values of Conformity Adj. $R^2 = .13$, $F(3, 230) = 13.11$, $p < .001$

Note. Family social class is based on Hollingshead Index of Social Status

* $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

Maternal Values and Children's Motivation Level

Correlational analysis was used to examine the associations between maternal values of self-direction and conformity and children's level of motivation, expressed as persistence in completing the challenging puzzle task. The correlation for the association between maternal self-direction values and child persistence was $r = .17$ ($p < .05$), and between conformity values and child persistence was $r = -.19$ ($p < .01$). Thus, both correlations are small but significant and reflect the direction of the associations as predicted in the second hypothesis such that children of mothers who valued self-direction demonstrated higher levels of persistence.

Maternal values as a mediator between family social status and children's motivation

The third research question, whether parental values mediate the association between family social status and child persistence, was examined following Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach. First, the correlation between family social class and maternal values was calculated, yielding $r = .39$ ($p < .01$) for self-direction values and $r = -.32$ ($p < .01$) for values of conformity. Next, the correlation between family social class and child persistence was obtained, yielding no significant result ($r = .05$, $p < .42$). Because no association between family social status and child motivation level was established, the mediation effect of maternal values between family social status and child outcome of interest could not be tested.

Maternal Values and Parental Education and Occupation

In the case of two-parent families, Hollingshead Index of Social Status is calculated by taking into account education level and occupation of both parents. Having found a

significant association between family social status and maternal values, it was worth while to examine whether maternal values of self-direction and conformity were related to each factor that is included in Hollingshead Index. It is possible that maternal values could have a stronger association with maternal education (thus reflecting mothers' personal attainments and, possibly, their backgrounds more than overall family social status) than with any other factor of the Hollingshead Index. Our sample contains 149 two parent families in which both mother and father are gainfully employed; the correlations were run for these families. The results are displayed in Table 4. Maternal values of self-direction and conformity were moderately and significantly related to both mothers' education and occupation. In fact, the correlation with fathers' occupation is nearly the same as for mother's occupation.

Table 4

Correlations Between Maternal Values and Parental Education and Occupation

	Values of self-direction	Values of conformity
	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>
Maternal education	.36**	-.35**
Maternal occupation	.37**	-.35**
Paternal education	.23**	-.26**
Paternal occupation	.35**	-.33**
Family social class	.41**	-.40**

Note. Family social class is based on Hollingshead Index of Social Status

N = 149; ** *p* < .01

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The overall goal of the present study was to examine the associations between family social class, maternal values of self-direction and conformity, and child persistence, which is viewed as one of the component processes of child motivational development. Drawing on theorizing of Kohn (1963; 1979) who emphasized the differences in values of self-direction and conformity between members of the middle class and the working class, we hypothesized that maternal values would be related to mothers' social class membership. Results obtained in this study provide support for this hypothesis. We found evidence that mothers from the middle class value self-direction in their children more and conformity less than their working-class counterparts. Consistent with Kohn's findings (1979; 2006), the associations between social class and maternal values of self-direction and conformity were moderate in size, accounting for a significant portion of variance in values. These findings correspond to the proposition that differences in day-in and day-out circumstances of life, experienced by the two social classes, contribute to the formation of different value systems.

As expected, we also found support for the associations between maternal values and child persistence in the predicted direction: children of mothers who value self-direction were more persistent in accomplishing a challenging task than children of mothers who value conformity. These findings are consistent with the literature that examines the relations between parental values, beliefs, and practices and child outcomes (Luster et al.,

1989; Tudge et al., 1999), suggesting that even in early childhood children differ according to their parents' values. Modest but significant correlation size for these associations may reflect the fact that although children of 3.5-years of age already show signs of parental socialization, this particular age may be just the beginning of the process of interiorization of parental values and belief system. We also cannot exclude the possibility of reciprocal effects between child characteristics and what mothers come to value in their children. It is possible that mothers of more competent and self-directed children support these traits in their children, and the same is true for mother-child dyads where children tend to be more conforming. The cross-sectional design of the present study does not permit us to examine the directionality of effects. Another possible explanation for the modest associations between maternal values and child persistence is possible dynamic changes in maternal values as a function of children's age. In their longitudinal study Tudge et al. (2008) showed that mothers of infants differ in their values of self-direction and conformity according to their social class. By the time the focal children were 3 years of age, the class differential in maternal values of practically disappeared, but became evident again when children were 6 years of age. Perhaps, certain experiences parents have while caring for their 3-year-old children, such as establishing authority, monitoring children's activities, and having children to behave in ways parents want them to behave, may account for these changes in parental values. Again, the cross-sectional nature of the present study does not allow us to examine the issue of child age and its links with maternal values. Other aspects of parenting that were not examined in the present study, such as parenting style, parental support, and parental

involvement, may be important contributors to children's motivational development (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989), as may be child characteristics such as temperament, self-regulatory abilities, or propensity for exploratory behaviors and curiosity, thus emphasizing the need for further studies that focus on early childhood motivation.

The associations between maternal values and child persistence, found in the present study, nevertheless, have important implications for the research in children's motivational development. These findings suggest that parental value systems may be an important factor in children's motivational development. Parents socialize their children according to their values and beliefs, and set goals for their children that correspond to parents' perception of what is important in life. In a society such as the United States where independence, autonomy, and self-direction are viewed as traits that facilitate life success, it is important to know how parental values are associated with children's achievement motivation. Such understanding can provide grounds for interventions and parent education programs, which may have long lasting impact of children's school achievements and beyond.

The present study also examined group differences in maternal values in terms of child gender and race, as well as possible moderating effects of gender and race on the associations between the social class and maternal values. No moderating effects were found, suggesting that the links between social class and maternal values does not differ by child gender or ethnic origin. The results indicate, however, some group differences in maternal values. The gender difference in maternal values of conformity, found in the present study, correspond to the literature on gender issues in parenting (Leaper, 2002),

which suggests the differential in parental encouragement of dependency and independency for girls and boys. Parents of girls encourage dependency and conformity in their daughters more than in their sons. The opposite is true for boys. The meta-analyses of Lytton and Romney (1991) and of Leaper, Anderson, and Sanders (1998) suggest that parents tend to promote their sons' self-control and independence more than their daughters'. Leaper et al. (1998) also found that mothers appeared to be more verbally directive with their daughters than with their sons, and that the magnitude of this effect increased with child age. The authors also argued that parents' differences in socialization of their sons and daughters may be related to the types of activities parents encourage in their children. Many feminine-stereotyped activities tend to emphasize collaborative behaviors that require participants to follow the rules of an activity or the rules of a group, whereas masculine-stereotyped activities focus on competitive, instrumental behaviors, thus potentially eliciting more conformity from girls than from boys.

The lack of gender differences in maternal values of self-direction in our sample provide support to a proposition that values of self-direction and conformity are related but separate constructs. This finding also supports Alwin's (1996) argument that parental values of self-direction in their children and social regard for autonomy and independence (i.e., constructs that are similar to self-direction) grew in salience over the last several decades in our society, and may be reflected in the similar importance contemporary mothers place on self-direction for both boys and girls. This finding also may provide evidence for blurring in stereotypical gender roles and attributions which

mothers have for their sons and daughters. Empirical findings suggest that daughters of mothers employed outside of the home, especially of single-parent mothers, tend to be less likely to adopt traditional gender stereotypes (Etaugh, 1993). Given the fact that 78% of mothers in our sample were employed outside of the home and 19% are single-parents, it is plausible to suggest that employed mothers, due to their own life experiences, tend to value self-direction as an important quality to have for their daughters equally as for their sons.

Another important finding of the present study was the racial differences in maternal values. We found that White mothers valued self-direction more and conformity less than Non-White mothers. Given that the Non-White group consists predominantly of Black participants, such results can be attributed to the cultural traditions of interdependence among Black populations or to the history of oppression of Black people in the United States and their involuntary need to conform to the external rules. It is possible that values of self-direction became more salient among Black parents over the last few decades as they did in the society in general (Alwin, 1996). Our results elucidate, however, that Black mothers value self-direction less and conformity more than White mothers. Having a racially and socially diverse sample, we are able to attribute these findings to the cultural particularities of Black and White subsamples and to overrule the possibility of the confounding between race and social class.

The hypothesized mediational model, where the proposed association between families' social class and children's persistence would be mediated by maternal values, was not supported by the data. Even though the results suggest the indirect effect of

social class on child persistence, because social class membership is associated with maternal values, and values are associated with child persistence, the lack of a direct link between social class and child persistence in some respect is a welcome finding. Having this direct link would imply that children from the working class were in a disadvantaged situation in regard to one more aspect of their development. Secondly, working-class mothers may support their children's motivational development in other ways, for example, by providing them with a structured environment, a factor that is considered to be one of the important elements in children's motivational development (Skinner et al., 2005).

Results regarding the associations between maternal values and paternal education and occupation provide support for the theory of assortative mating (Sweeney & Cancian, 2004). The theory proposes that some of the criteria for choosing a partner include the similarity in educational attainment and economic status, which roughly can be assumed from a potential partner's occupational status, and the similarity in values, beliefs, and viewpoints. Both of these criteria are reflected in our data, suggesting that parents from two parent families in our sample are functioning as a unit rather than as two independent individuals. The results also support the inclusion of both parents' education and occupation in calculating overall family social class, thus providing validation for the use of Hollingshead four factors Index of Social Status.

Overall, the current findings are consistent with the theoretical background of the study and indicate the associations between social class, maternal values of self-direction and conformity, and child persistence. The results highlight that the parental value system

is related to children's motivation and that the process of children's motivational development is intertwined with the broader aspects of children's environment, such as social class of their families. An important implication of the findings is that educational and developmental programs that aim at facilitation of children's motivation should take into account the effects the parental value system may have on children's outcomes. The finding that children's motivation is linked to parental values of self-direction is valuable information for parents and teachers alike. If parents or teachers would like to support motivational development of young children, one of the ways they can do that is through encouragement of children's self-direction.

The present study extends our understanding of the contextual factors that are associated with the development of child motivation. It also has some methodological limitations. Our sample consisted of mother-child dyads, therefore only maternal values of self-direction and conformity for their children were assessed. In order to understand the links between parental value systems and child development, it is important to assess also fathers' values of their children's characteristics and include them into the conceptual models along with mothers' values. The cross-sectional design of the study limits the interpretation of the results to the level of associations and does not permit the examination of the direction of effects found in the analyses. The main goal of the study was to establish the connections between the key variables, and therefore it did not assess any particular processes through which maternal values of self-direction and conformity are related to child persistence.

Despite some limitations, the present study possesses several strengths. The size of the sample provided enough statistical power to have confidence in the obtained results. The sample was representative to the population of the area from which it was drawn and diverse in terms of participants' race and social class, thus allowing us to separate the effects of race from the effects of social class. Considering limited information that is currently available in the research literature on the subject of child motivation in early childhood, and particularly for the age group between 3 and 6 years of age, this study is a successful attempt to bridge the gap in the scientific understanding of children's motivational development and illuminate the relations between motivation and the broader factors of children's environment.

The present study raised several important questions that can be answered only through the implementation of a longitudinal design. The direction of effects between maternal values and child persistence, the dynamic changes in maternal values as a function of children's age, and the stability of the relations between maternal values and child persistence are examples of such research questions. Future research in this area should also include the assessment of children's personal characteristics that may be associated with their motivational orientations, as well as other characteristics of parenting, such as parental support and involvement that are hypothesized to facilitate children's motivation. In order for us to understand the underpinnings of children's school success, greater emphasis should be placed on children's motivational development, particularly in children of pre-school age. Only then can basic research be useful and informative for intervention programs, practitioners and policy makers.

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Appendix A Parental Values Q-Sort

Most Desirable

Every parent desires that their child have certain qualities. Listed below are several qualities that many parents consider to be important. Please check **the 3 most desirable** characteristics for your child to have from the list below:

Please check the THREE most desirable:

1. ____ That he/she is considerate of others.
2. ____ That he/she is interested in how and why things happen
3. ____ That he/she is responsible
4. ____ That he/she has good manners
5. ____ That he/she is neat and clean
6. ____ That he/she acts like a boy/girl should
7. ____ That he/she has self-control
8. ____ That he/she is a good student
9. ____ That he/she obeys his/her parents well
10. ____ That he/she has good sense and sound judgment
11. ____ That he/she gets along well with other children
12. ____ That he/she is honest
13. ____ That he/she tries hard to succeed

Of the 3 most desirable characteristics checked above, please write the corresponding number of **the 1 most desirable**.

<p>Of the three chosen, the ONE most desirable is</p> <p>NUMBER</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>
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Least Important

All of these qualities may be desirable, but some are more important than others. Please check **the 3 least important** characteristics for your child from the list below (**must be different from your choices for the most desirable**):

Please check the THREE least important:

1. ____ That he/she is considerate of others
2. ____ That he/she is interested in how and why things happen
3. ____ That he/she is responsible
4. ____ That he/she has good manners
5. ____ That he/she is neat and clean
6. ____ That he/she acts like a boy/girl should
7. ____ That he/she has self-control
8. ____ That he/she is a good student
9. ____ That he/she obeys his/her parents well
10. ____ That he/she has good sense and sound judgement
11. ____ That he/she gets along well with other children
12. ____ That he/she is honest
13. ____ That he/she tries hard to succeed

Of the 3 least important characteristics checked above, please write the corresponding number of **the 1 least important**.

<p>Of the three chosen, the ONE least important is</p> <p>NUMBER</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>

Appendix B

Persistence Coding Scheme

Start coding when the jar hits the table.

Stop coding when either the child finished the task, or the experimenter indicated the end by talking to child after 4.5 minutes

Time the duration of the actual task

Code whether task is completed

If there is a bathroom break – stop interval and start again when the child is back to the table

No engagement

- not touching or purposefully looking at any part of the toy
- walking away from the table, even if holding a block
- turning away from the toy to talk to mother or experimenter
- looking away even if holding a block, touching the toy, or manipulating it

Low engagement

- manipulating the toy but without task-directed behavior (task-directed = trying to fit blocks into the shape sorter)
- touching clock hands
- stacking blocks or otherwise manipulating blocks
- playing with the jar
- putting blocks back in the jar
- offering pieces to the mother or experimenter

- holding a block without studying the block shape or without studying the sorter slots
- picking up pieces off the floor
- picking pieces out of the sorter and putting them into the jar or on the table
- trying to get mother's or experimenter's attention to the game
- non-discrete movements of blocks around the clock

High engagement

- efforts to place blocks in shape sorter
- taking pieces out of the jar to put them in the sorter
- looking at the blocks or slots carefully to select the right shape
- picking a block out of the sorter and putting it back in