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Raising trophy kids: The role of mothers' contingent self-esteem in maternal promotion of extrinsic goals



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ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of mothers' child-invested contingent self-esteem, that is, their tendency to hinge their self-worth on their child's achievements, in maternal promotion of extrinsic goals, as perceived by adolescents. It was also examined whether maternal promotion of extrinsic goals would, in turn, relate to adolescents' Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). Participants were 184 mothers and their adolescent children (66% female). Maternal child-invested contingent self-esteem predicted adolescent-perceived maternal promotion of extrinsic goals, even when taking into account the variance shared between the promotion of extrinsic goals and mothers' use of a controlling parenting style. Maternal child-invested contingent self-esteem also moderated associations between mothers' personal pursuit of extrinsic goals and their promotion of those goals, such that the association between mothers' own extrinsic goals and their promotion of those goals was significant only among mothers high on child-invested contingent self-esteem. Maternal promotion of extrinsic goals was, in turn, related to adolescent SDO, suggesting that the dynamics examined in this study ultimately relate to adolescents' social and ideological development.

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Some parents emphasize to their children the importance of goals such as being rich, being popular, and being good-looking. Although these goals are appealing at first sight, they are known to provide little lasting satisfaction and happiness in the longer run (Kasser, 2002). Why do some parents emphasize such extrinsic goals, sometimes even at the expense of more inherently rewarding intrinsic goals such as contributing to the community (e.g., through volunteering work)? In this study, we examined the potential role of maternal child-invested contingent self-esteem, that is, the tendency for parents to hinge their self-worth upon their children's achievement. We additionally examined (a) the interplay of mothers' personal endorsement of extrinsic goals and child-invested contingent self-esteem in predicting their promotion of extrinsic goals, as perceived by adolescents, and (b) the potential contribution of these dynamics to adolescents' Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), a social-political attitude predisposing people to prejudice.

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Extrinsic and intrinsic goals and goal promotion

In Goal Content Theory, one of the mini-theories within Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Niemiec, & Soenens, 2010), a distinction is made between intrinsic goals such as community contribution, affiliation, and personal development and extrinsic goals such as financial aspirations, physical attractiveness, and fame. Many studies have shown that extrinsic goals are distinct from intrinsic goals and that both types of goals are related differently to individuals' personal and social functioning (e.g., Grouzet et al., 2005; Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Extrinsic, relative to intrinsic, goals have been found to relate to lower personal well-being (e.g., Dittmar, Bond, Hurst, & Kasser, 2014; Kasser & Ryan, 1996), decreased academic performance and motivation (e.g., Ku, Dittmar, & Banerjee, 2012), and even symptoms of psychopathology including bulimic symptoms (e.g., Thogerson-Ntoumani, Ntoumanis, & Nikitaras, 2010).

According to SDT, extrinsic goals are detrimental because, in contrast to intrinsic goals, they fail to provide satisfaction and can even undermine satisfaction of individuals' basic psychological needs, that is, the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Soenens, & Duriez, 2008). That is, when pursuing extrinsic goals people would feel pressured to demonstrate their personal worth through the attainment of extrinsic goods (autonomy frustration), may more easily doubt their capacity to achieving their goals (competence frustration), and would be more likely to engage in a competitive interpersonal comparison that alienates them from others (relatedness frustration). Research indeed suggests that, whereas intrinsic goals are related positively to need satisfaction, extrinsic goals relate to need frustration (e.g., Niemiec, Ryan, & Deci, 2009; Unanue, Vignoles, Dittmar, & Vansteenkiste, 2014).

While the majority of studies grounded in Goal Content Theory have examined the correlates of the *personal* endorsement of intrinsic, relative to extrinsic, goals recent research begins to address the *contextual promotion* of extrinsic (relative to intrinsic) goals by others, including socialization figures (Vansteenkiste et al., 2008). For instance with regard to parents, it has been shown that when parents encourage their children to pursue extrinsic (relative to intrinsic) goals, children display a more fragile type of self-worth (Wouters et al., 2014) and poorer learning, as indexed for instance by test anxiety and lower grades (Mouratidis, Vansteenkiste, Lens, Michou, & Soenens, 2013). Given the detrimental outcomes associated with parents' promotion of extrinsic goals, it is important to identify its antecedents. Herein, we address the role of parental child-invested contingent self-esteem.

Parental goals and child-invested contingent self-esteem

Child-invested contingent self-esteem refers to parents' tendency to hinge their self-worth on their children's achievements (Ng, Pomerantz, & Deng, 2014). It is characteristic of parents who seek to enhance their self-worth through the child's accomplishments. As a consequence, their self-esteem is likely to vary with the child's performance: Parents feel more proud and successful when the child is successful, while the parents' self-worth plummets when the child fails to meet standards of excellence. Parents high on child-invested contingent self-esteem would engage in more controlling or pressuring parenting because they would experience the use of controlling tactics as the fastest and most cost-efficient route to push the child towards success and, consequently, to boost their own self-worth. Research has confirmed that child-invested contingent self-esteem is indeed related to more controlling parenting (Grolnick, Price, Beiswenger, & Sauck, 2007; Ng et al., 2014; Wuyts, Vansteenkiste, Soenens, & Assor, in press).

We aimed to add to this small body of work by examining whether parental child-invested contingent self-esteem would be related not only to parental style (i.e., *how* controlling parents interact with the child) but also to the content of the goals they highlight towards the child (i.e., *what* kind of goals they promote). Specifically, we hypothesized that child-invested contingent self-esteem would be related to parental promotion of extrinsic (but not intrinsic) goals. The child's attainment of extrinsic goals would be conceived by parents high on child-invested contingent self-esteem as a critical indicator of the child's success. This would be the case because, at least in Western society, extrinsic goals are highly socially valued (Kasser, Cohn, Kanner, & Ryan, 2007) and are often portrayed as a key indicator of success (Dittmar, 2007). As such, parents high on child-invested contingent self-esteem may anticipate more social recognition and a stronger boost to their own ego when their child aspires to and eventually attains extrinsic goals. Because the outcomes associated with the attainment of intrinsic goals are less visible, yield less direct social recognition, and — as such — are less likely to result in an immediate boost in self-worth, child-invested contingent self-esteem was expected to be unrelated or related negatively to the promotion of intrinsic goals.

Another, perhaps more obvious, antecedent of parents' promotion of extrinsic goals is parents' own pursuit of extrinsic goals. Research indeed shows that, on average, parents tend to promote to their children the goals they value themselves (e.g., Benish-Weisman, Levy, & Knafo, 2013). Accordingly, it can be expected that parents who pursue extrinsic goals themselves are more likely to promote those goals towards their child. It should be noted, however, that this association is far from perfect, indicating that parents differ in the degree to which they promote the goals they hold themselves to their children. Herein, we forward the hypothesis that mothers' child-invested contingent self-esteem affects the degree to which mothers' personal extrinsic goals pursuit manifests in the promotion of those goals to their children. Mothers who value the importance of extrinsic goals themselves and who, at the same time, invest their self-worth in the child's achievements would be most likely to promote extrinsic goals towards their child because they anticipate that their child's attainment of extrinsic goals will contribute to their worth as a parent and as a person.

In contrast, child-invested contingent self-esteem was not expected to moderate associations between mothers' personal intrinsic goals and their promotion of intrinsic goals. Research has shown that intrinsic goals are typically regulated on the

basis of volitional motives (Sheldon, Ryan, Deci, & Kasser, 2004). In other words, most often people pursue and promote intrinsic goals because they deeply endorse and personally value those goals, not because they feel pressured to prove their own worth through the attainment of these goals (as is more often the case with extrinsic goals). Because contingent self-esteem and intrinsic goals are less likely to be interwoven with each other, contingent self-esteem is less likely to affect associations between maternal personal and promoted intrinsic goals.

The Social and Ideological Consequences of (the Promotion of) Extrinsic Goals

It is important to examine dynamics of parental goal promotion because the content of the goals promoted by parents may ultimately relate not only to adolescents' well-being but also their social and political orientation (Vansteenkiste et al., 2008). A Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) is a particularly relevant social-political outcome of parental goal promotion. It involves a preference for hierarchical (rather than egalitarian) relationships in society, coupled with a preference for one's own social group to take a leading position in the social hierarchy (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). SDO has been identified as a systematic predictor of various forms of prejudice (e.g., Duriez & Van Hiel, 2002; Sibley, Robertson, & Wilson, 2006).

Extrinsic goals have been hypothesized to relate to SDO because, across time, individuals adopting extrinsic goals may develop the view that the world is a competitive jungle where people need to compete with each other to attain scarce extrinsic goods such as money and beauty (Duriez, Soenens, et al., 2007; Duriez, Vansteenkiste, et al., 2007). Such a jungle world view is a key determinant of SDO (Duckitt, Wagner, du Plessis, & Birum, 2002). Consistent with these hypotheses, research has shown that the pursuit of extrinsic, relative to intrinsic, goals predicts SDO and subsequent prejudice (Duriez, Soenens, et al., 2007; Duriez, Vansteenkiste, et al., 2007). A few studies also demonstrated associations between parental promotion of extrinsic goals and SDO (e.g., Duriez, Soenens, & Vansteenkiste, 2007, 2008).

Given the conceptual and empirical reasons for linking extrinsic goals to SDO, in this study we examined adolescent SDO as an outcome of the presumed interplay between mothers' extrinsic goals and their child-invested contingent self-esteem. It was hypothesized that the combined presence of maternal extrinsic goals and child-invested contingent self-esteem would be related to adolescent SDO via the association of this combination of factors with maternal promotion of extrinsic goals.

The present study

On the basis of SDT we examined the hypothesis that both parental child-invested contingent self-esteem and parental personal pursuit of extrinsic goals would be related to parental promotion of such goals. We also examined the possibility that both factors would interact in the prediction of parents' promotion of extrinsic goals, such that their combined presence would be related most strongly to the promotion of extrinsic goals. Finally, we examined adolescent SDO as an outcome of these factors. These research aims were examined in a sample of adolescents and their mothers. Adolescence is a particularly relevant developmental period to examine processes involved in the socialization of goals because identity formation is a central developmental task during this period (Erikson, 1968) and because (intrinsic and extrinsic) goals are an important part of adolescents' emerging identity (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2011). Testifying to the dynamic role of intrinsic and extrinsic goals in processes of identity formation, Duriez, Luyckx, Soenens, and Berzonsky (2012) demonstrated reciprocal longitudinal associations between the content of adolescents' goals and their style of approaching the identity exploration process.

To provide a conservative test of our hypotheses, we relied on a multi-informant approach with mothers reporting on their own goals and their child-invested contingent self-esteem and with adolescents reporting on maternal promotion of extrinsic goals and on their level of SDO. In addition, we controlled for the effect of controlling parenting. As mentioned before, child-invested contingent self-esteem is related to more controlling parenting. Moreover, research has shown that parents' controlling style has a modest yet significant (positive) association with the promotion of extrinsic goals (Duriez, Soenens, et al., 2007; Duriez, Vansteenkiste, et al., 2007). As such, any association between child-invested contingent self-esteem and extrinsic goal promotion might be due to the variance shared between parents' style and content of goal promotion. We thus took into account the variance shared with controlling parenting to examine whether the association between child-invested contingent self-esteem and extrinsic goals is unique.

Method

Participants

Participants were 10th to 12th grade students from three secondary schools in Flanders (Belgium) and their mothers. All students were following the academic track. Passive informed consent was obtained from parents. Parents received a letter that explained the purpose and method of the study two weeks prior to the data collection and they were asked to fill out a form if they did not want their child to participate in the study. In addition, mothers received a questionnaire that they were asked to fill out and to deliver to the school's principal by the time data collection would take place. A passive (rather than active) consent procedure was used because active consent procedures with parents may result in sampling biases that over-represent well-functioning adolescents and families. A total of 10 parents did not allow their child to participate. The adolescent questionnaires were administered during a class period. Students had approximately 45 min to complete the survey.

The sample initially consisted of 290 adolescents, of which 184 mothers (63%) also participated. To examine whether adolescents of participating parents differed from adolescents from non-participating parents on the study variables, we ran a series of independent samples *t*-tests. No significant differences were found between the two groups of adolescents on the study variables reported by adolescents (i.e., maternal promotion of extrinsic goals and maternal promotion of intrinsic goals; both *ps* > .05). Maternal participation did show a small yet significant association with adolescent gender [$\chi^2(1) = 4.24$, $p < .05$] with girls being more represented relative to boys in the subsample of adolescents whose mothers participated. However, adolescent gender did not have substantial effects on the study variables (see below).

The final sample used in this study consisted of 184 mother-adolescent dyads. The adolescent sample was 66% female and adolescents ranged in age from 14 to 20 years ($M = 16.83$ years; $SD = .98$). A total of 154 families (84%) were intact (i.e., both biological parents were married or living together). Mothers' mean age was 45 years ($SD = 3.99$). They indicated their educational level on a scale from 1 (*highest degree obtained = primary school*) to 6 (*highest degree obtained = university*). Their mean educational level was 4.03 ($SD = 1.26$), indicating an average of about 15 years of education.

Measures

Child-invested contingent self-esteem

Mothers were administered the Child-invested Contingent Self-Esteem Scale (Wuyts et al., *in press*). This 15-item scale contains items assessing the extent to which parents' self-esteem is contingent upon children's achievement (e.g. "How I feel about myself is often related to my child's achievements"). Items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*). Wuyts et al. (*in press*) demonstrated the reliability and validity of the scale. For instance, the scale was associated with conceptually related constructs such as parental perfectionism and was predictive of both parent- and child-reported scores on controlling parenting. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha was .92.

Maternal personal pursuit of goals

Mothers filled out an 18-item version (Duriez, Vansteenkiste, Soenens, & De Witte, 2007) of the Aspiration Index (Kasser & Ryan, 1996), which is the standard measure of extrinsic and intrinsic goal pursuit as conceptualized in SDT. Mothers rated to what extent they attached importance to the extrinsic values of financial success, image/physical attractiveness, and fame. They also rated to what extent they attached importance to the intrinsic values of growth, community contribution, and affiliation. Each subscale was measured with three items (e.g., "It is important to me to be financially successful in life"). We computed total scores for extrinsic and intrinsic goal pursuit by averaging the subscales representing both higher-order dimensions. Cronbach's alpha was .85 and .88 for extrinsic and intrinsic goal pursuit, respectively.

Adolescent-perceived maternal promotion of goals

Adolescents rated the extent to which they felt their mothers encouraged them to pursue extrinsic and intrinsic goals using a scale developed by Duriez, Soenens, and Vansteenkiste (2007, 2008). This scale is a straightforward adaptation of the Aspiration Index. Rather than measuring parents' own goal pursuit, it taps into the degree to which parents promote goals vis-à-vis their children. To this end, the same 18 items from the Aspiration Index were rephrased to assess adolescents' perceived parental goal promotion. An example item for mother-promoted extrinsic goals reads: "My mother finds it important that I am financially successful in my life". Cronbach's alpha was .81 and .84 for extrinsic and intrinsic goal promotion, respectively.

Adolescent SDO

Adolescents completed the Dutch version (Duriez & Van Hiel, 2002) of the well-validated 14 item SDO scale (Pratto et al., 1994; e.g., 'It's sometimes necessary to step on others to get ahead in life'). Cronbach's alpha was .86.

Controlling parenting

Mothers were administered a parent version of the well-validated Psychological Control Scale – Youth Self Report (PCS-YSR; Barber, 1996; 8 items, e.g., "I am less friendly to my son/daughter if s/he doesn't see things like I do"). Cronbach's alpha was .72.

Results

Descriptive statistics, correlations, and background variables

Descriptive statistics and correlations between the study variables can be found in Table 1. As expected, maternal child-invested contingent self-esteem was related to adolescent perceived promotion of extrinsic goals and unrelated to promotion of intrinsic goals. Also as expected, mothers' personal pursuit of extrinsic goals was related to adolescent-perceived promotion of extrinsic goals. Similarly, mothers' personal pursuit of intrinsic goals was related to adolescent-perceived

Table 1
Correlations and descriptive statistics.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Child-invested contingent self-esteem (MR)	2.79	.68						
2. Controlling parenting (MR)	2.16	.56	.24***					
3. Personal extrinsic goals (MR)	2.72	.63	.49***	.21**				
4. Personal intrinsic goals (MR)	4.14	.56	.18*	-.11	.31***			
5. Promoted extrinsic goals (AR)	2.65	.61	.22**	.16*	.26***	-.01		
6. Promoted intrinsic goals (AR)	4.01	.52	.00	.06	.03	.29***	.07	
7. Adolescent SDO (AR)	2.32	.61	.13	.21**	.13	-.09	.31***	-.28***

Note: MR = Mother Report; AR = Adolescent Report; SDO = Social Dominance Orientation. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

promotion of intrinsic goals. Maternal child-invested contingent self-esteem was related positively to maternal pursuit of extrinsic goals. There was also a smaller positive association with maternal pursuit of intrinsic goals. However, this association became non-significant when controlling for the variance shared between intrinsic and extrinsic goal pursuit (partial $r = .03$, $p > .05$). Finally, maternal perceived promotion of extrinsic goals was related positively to adolescent SDO. In contrast, maternal promotion of intrinsic goals was related negatively to SDO.

To examine whether adolescent gender and family structure (intact versus non-intact) were related to the study variables, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with gender and family structure as fixed variables and with all study variables as dependent variables. While the multivariate effect of gender [Wilks' Lambda = .89, $F(7, 168) = 2.97$, $p < .01$] was significant, the multivariate effect of family structure [Wilks' Lambda = .96, $F(7, 168) = .90$, $p > .05$] was not. Univariate analyses showed that gender had an effect on adolescent SDO in particular [$F(1, 174) = 4.40$, $p < .001$] with males ($M = 2.58$; $SD = .67$) scoring higher than females ($M = 2.19$; $SD = .52$). We also examined associations of adolescent age, maternal age, and maternal educational level with the study variables. Both adolescent age and maternal age were related negatively to maternal pursuit of extrinsic goals ($r = -.18$, $p < .05$ and $r = -.17$, $p < .05$, respectively), indicating that older mothers and mothers with older children were oriented less towards extrinsic goals. Maternal educational level was related positively to maternal pursuit and promotion of intrinsic goals ($r = .25$, $p < .001$ and $r = .20$, $p < .01$, respectively) and was related negatively to maternal pursuit of extrinsic goals ($r = -.25$, $p < .001$) and to adolescent SDO ($r = -.21$, $p < .01$). Given these associations, we controlled for the effects of gender, age (mother and adolescent), and maternal educational level in the main analyses.

Structural equation modeling

To examine the main hypotheses a series of Structural Equations Models (SEM) with latent variables was estimated using Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). Each latent construct in the model was indicated by three randomly created parcels. To control for the effects of the background variables, each parcel was regressed on the background variables and the unstandardized residual scores on these parcels were used as indicators. Prior to testing structural models, a measurement model was estimated including latent variables for all 7 constructs listed in Table 1. Model fit was evaluated on the basis of the Chi-square statistic (χ^2), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and the Standardized Root-Mean-square Residual (SRMR). The χ^2 should be as small as possible. A CFI value of .90 or higher indicates reasonable fit. An RMSEA value of .06 or lower and an SRMR value of .08 or lower indicate acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2010). The measurement model had an adequate fit to the data [$\chi^2(168) = 266.04$, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .05] and all indicators had loadings significant at $p < .001$.

In a first structural model it was examined whether maternal child-invested contingent self-esteem would relate to perceived maternal promotion of extrinsic goals even when taking into account the contribution of controlling parenting. We did not include the promotion of intrinsic goals in this model because there was no significant correlation between intrinsic goals and child-invested contingent self-esteem to begin with (Table 1). Estimation of this model [$\chi^2(24) = 29.42$, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .03] showed that the relation between maternal child-invested contingent self-esteem and adolescent perceived promotion of extrinsic goals was significant ($\beta = .21$, $p < .05$).

In a second structural model adolescent perceived promotion of extrinsic goals was predicted by child-invested contingent self-esteem, maternal personal pursuit of extrinsic goals, and the interaction between both predictors. Since MPlus provides only limited information about fit for moderation analyses (Muthén & Muthén, 2012), it has been recommended to first test the main effects of the predictors, without considering potential interactions (Maslowsky, Jager, & Hemken, 2015). Given that the model without the interaction term showed adequate fit [$\chi^2(24) = 43.96$, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .03], we proceeded by adding the interaction term. Results showed that the contribution of child-invested contingent self-esteem was no longer significant ($\beta = .06$, $p > .05$). However, both the main effect of maternal personal pursuit of extrinsic goals ($\beta = .23$, $p < .05$) and the interaction term ($\beta = .21$, $p < .05$) were significant.

To graphically display this interaction we followed the procedure outlined by Dawson (2014; www.jeremydawson.com/slopes.htm). As shown in Fig. 1, while maternal extrinsic goal pursuit was unrelated to perceived promotion of extrinsic goals at low levels of child-invested contingent self-esteem ($\beta = .02$, $p > .05$), it was related positively to perceived promotion of extrinsic goals at high levels of child-invested contingent self-esteem ($\beta = .44$, $p < .01$). Mothers who pursued extrinsic goals were only perceived to promote extrinsic goals by their adolescents when they scored high on child-invested contingent self-esteem.

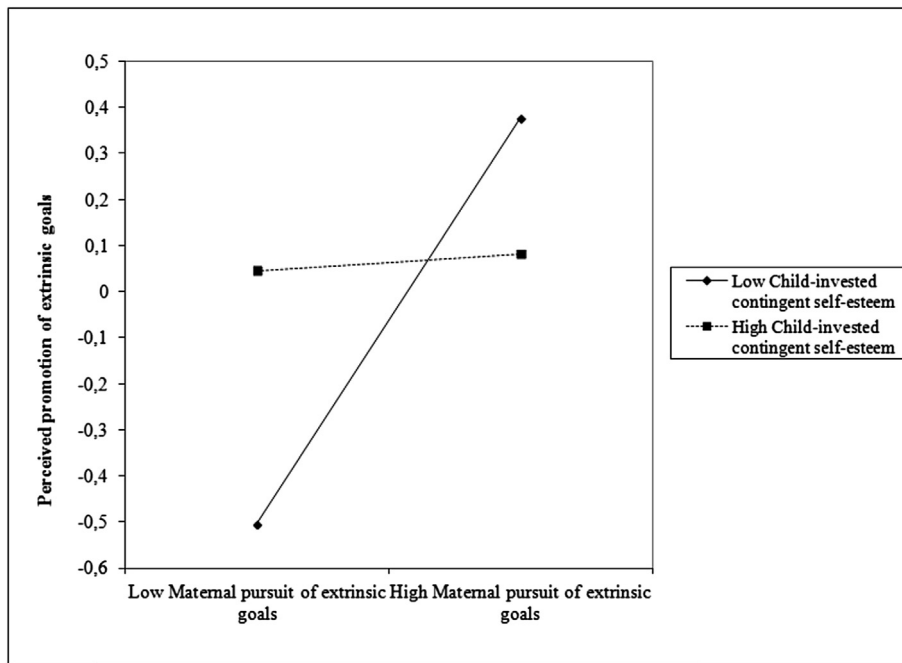


Fig. 1. Interaction between maternal child-invested contingent self-esteem and maternal personal pursuit of extrinsic goals in the prediction of perceived maternal promotion of extrinsic goals.

We also ran a model to examine whether child-invested contingent self-esteem would moderate associations between mothers' personal pursuit of intrinsic goals and their perceived promotion of intrinsic goals [$\chi^2(24) = 43.34$, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .04]. Maternal personal pursuit of intrinsic goals was a significant predictor of perceived maternal promotion of intrinsic goals ($\beta = .29$, $p < .01$), while child-invested contingent self-esteem was not ($\beta = -.01$, $p > .05$). The interaction between child-invested contingent self-esteem and personal pursuit of intrinsic goals ($\beta = -.21$, $p < .05$) was significant. However, the sign of the interaction was opposite to the interaction involved in mothers' extrinsic goals. Further inspection of this interaction revealed that at high levels of child-invested contingent self-esteem, the association between maternal pursuit of intrinsic goals and the promotion of intrinsic goals was not significant ($\beta = .08$, $p > .05$). At low levels of child-invested contingent self-esteem this association was highly significant ($\beta = .49$, $p < .001$). In other words, while child-invested contingent self-esteem exacerbated effects of maternal extrinsic goals, it dampened effects of maternal intrinsic goals.^{1,2}

In a third and final structural model we added adolescent SDO to the second model. Specifically, we modeled adolescent SDO as an outcome of perceived maternal promotion of extrinsic goals [$\chi^2(50) = 83.23$, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .05]. Results showed that both maternal personal pursuit of extrinsic goals ($\beta = .22$, $p < .05$) and the interaction between personal

¹ Some SDT-based studies on goals have relied on aggregated scores reflecting the relative importance of extrinsic relative to intrinsic goals (e.g., Kasser & Ryan, 1996). We examined whether maternal child-invested contingent self-esteem would also play a role when using such aggregated scores reflecting the importance of extrinsic over intrinsic goals. To do so, we created scores for maternal pursuit of extrinsic (relative to intrinsic) goals and for maternal promotion of extrinsic (relative to intrinsic) goals using procedures outlined by Duriez, Soenens, et al. (2007) and Duriez, Vansteenkiste, et al. (2007). We found that the moderating effect of child-invested contingent self-esteem was not significant when using these relative scores ($\beta = .06$; $p > .05$), indicating that the moderating effect of maternal child-invested contingent self-esteem pertains specifically to mothers' extrinsic and intrinsic goals separately and not to the relative importance attached to extrinsic versus intrinsic goals.

² We performed a number of analyses with the separate subscales for extrinsic and intrinsic goals. First, we examined correlations between child-invested contingent self-esteem and perceived maternal promotion of the three separate extrinsic and intrinsic goals. Child-invested contingent self-esteem was associated significantly with financial success ($r = .18$, $p < .05$) and with physical attractiveness ($r = .25$, $p < .01$) but not with status/prestige ($r = .11$, $p > .05$). Child-invested contingent self-esteem was unrelated to promotion of each of the individual intrinsic goals. Second, we examined the moderating role of child-invested contingent self-esteem in the association between mothers' personal pursuit and perceived promotion of each of the individual goals. It was found that only the interaction between child-invested contingent self-esteem and the pursuit of physical attractiveness was significant in predicting the promotion of physical attractiveness. These analyses suggest that child-invested contingent self-esteem plays the most prominent role in dynamics of physical attractiveness. Possibly this is the case because, out of the three extrinsic goals, the goal of physical attractiveness may hold the strongest promise for direct and visible social recognition and esteem. We would like to be cautious, however, in interpreting this finding because some of the subscales for intrinsic and extrinsic goals were less reliable ($< .70$). Because the current study is the first to examine associations between child-invested contingent self-esteem and parental promotion of goals, there is a need to replicate this finding before firm conclusions can be drawn regarding effects of specific goals.

extrinsic goals and child-invested contingent self-esteem ($\beta = .21, p < .05$) were significant predictors of perceived maternal promotion of extrinsic goals which, in turn, was related significantly to adolescent SDO ($\beta = .58, p < .001$).³

Discussion

Research increasingly shows that when parents prioritize extrinsic goals over intrinsic goals in their child-rearing, children display unfavorable developmental outcomes including fragile self-worth (Wouters et al., 2014) and learning problems (Mouratidis et al., 2013). The current study identified at least one important psychological antecedent of parental promotion of extrinsic goals, that is, child-invested contingent self-esteem. We found that mothers who invest their self-worth in their children's achievement are perceived to promote more extrinsic goals. Mothers who strive to obtain self-worth through their children's accomplishments may highlight the importance of extrinsic goals to their children because those goals are perceived to bring about social recognition, success, and happiness and, as such, seem ideal to boost their ego as a parent. People are indeed inclined to believe that socially valued and visible outcomes such as money and beauty will make them happy (Sheldon, Gunz, Nichols, & Ferguson, 2010). Ironically, however, the attainment of extrinsic goals typically does not produce the anticipated happiness and success (Niemi et al., 2009). As such, through parental promotion of extrinsic goals adolescents may be taught to pursue goals that seem promising at first sight but that fail to foster lasting and deep-level psychological health.

Consistent with previous research (e.g., Ng et al., 2014; Wuyts et al., *in press*), we found that child-invested contingent self-esteem was related to a more controlling parenting style. Importantly, our findings also showed that the association of child-invested contingent self-esteem with the promotion of extrinsic goals remained significant when taking into account its association with controlling parenting. These findings suggest that child-invested contingent self-esteem relates to both parents' style of interacting with their children and the content of the goals that are emphasized.

Our findings showed that child-invested contingent self-esteem also played another important role, that is, as a moderator of the association between mothers' personal pursuit of extrinsic goals and their promotion of those goals. That is, child-invested contingent self-esteem appears to function as a catalyst of mothers' own extrinsic goals: only mothers high on child-invested contingent self-esteem seem to impose their own extrinsic goal framework on their child by emphasizing those goals in the child-rearing process. It makes sense indeed that mothers who strive to enhance their self-worth through the child's successes and who at the same time believe that extrinsic goal pursuit is the path to happiness and success, highlight the importance of extrinsic goals in their communication with the child.

Conversely, the findings also suggest that not all mothers who personally pursue extrinsic goals also promote those goals towards their child, a finding consistent with recent research showing that parents' personal goals are distinct from their socialization goals (Benish-Weisman et al., 2013). Specifically, low scores on child-invested contingent self-esteem may buffer against the transmission of extrinsic goals. When mothers do not hinge their self-worth on the child's achievement, they do not necessarily impose their own value system on the child. These findings are in line with the general notion of inter-individual differences in the motivational regulation of (extrinsic) goals. That is, people differ in the degree to which they pursue extrinsic goals for controlled and pressuring reasons (such as contingent self-esteem) versus relatively more autonomous and volitional reasons (such as a personal endorsement of and identification with the importance of those goals) (Sheldon et al., 2004). Our findings suggest that mothers' pursuit of extrinsic goals only translated into an emphasis on extrinsic goals in child-rearing when it was driven by relatively more controlled reasons (i.e., maternal attempts to prove themselves through their child's successes). When driven by relatively more autonomous reasons, parents may be more flexible in the type of goals they promote to their children and they may be more open towards the goals preferred by the children themselves, thus not necessarily imposing their own values.

The key finding in this study was that the combined presence of maternal child-invested contingent self-esteem and personal maternal pursuit of extrinsic goals predicted perceived maternal promotion of extrinsic goals. Perceived maternal promotion of extrinsic goals, in turn, was found to be related to adolescent SDO. The latter association is in line with findings from a few previous studies (Duriez, Soenens, et al., 2007; Duriez, Vansteenkiste, et al., 2007, 2008). This study extends those previous studies by examining the antecedents of maternal promotion of extrinsic goals and, as such, provides further information about the more distal developmental origins of adolescent SDO. Our findings suggest that the combined presence of maternal child-invested contingent self-esteem and extrinsic goals, through its association with the promotion of extrinsic goals, may be detrimental to children's psychosocial adjustment not only in terms of children's personal adjustment but also in terms of the development of unfavorable social-political attitudes in adolescents such as SDO. Indeed, research has shown that SDO is a robust predictor of prejudice and intolerance in adolescents (e.g., Duriez, Soenens, et al., 2007; Duriez, Vansteenkiste, et al., 2007). In other studies, adolescent SDO also has been found to predict relation aggression (Mayeux, 2014) and support for non-democratic decision-making procedures (such as oligarchy; Ellenbroek, Verkuyten, Thijs, &

³ We also tested whether child-invested contingent self-esteem and personal pursuit of extrinsic goals would interact in the direct prediction of adolescent SDO. Results showed that neither the main effect of child-invested contingent self-esteem ($\beta = .07, p > .05$) nor the main effect of maternal personal pursuit of extrinsic goals ($\beta = .12, p > .05$) on SDO was significant. However, the interaction term was close to significance ($\beta = .22, p = .09$). The shape of this interaction was very similar to the interaction predicting the perceived promotion of extrinsic goals: there was only a positive association between maternal personal extrinsic goals and adolescent SDO when mothers scored high on child-invested contingent self-esteem. This finding further underscores the importance and robustness of the interaction between maternal extrinsic goals and child-invested contingent self-esteem.

Poppe, 2014). The fact that SDO has implications for adolescents' interaction style in close interpersonal relationships as well as for their emerging views on politics and society underscores the importance of our findings regarding the developmental background of SDO.

We hypothesized that maternal child-invested contingent self-esteem would not moderate associations between mothers' pursuit of intrinsic goals and their promotion of intrinsic goals because these goals are typically regulated on the basis of more autonomous and volitional reasons (rather than on the basis of the internally pressuring motives involved in contingent self-esteem). Unexpectedly, child-invested contingent self-esteem did moderate effects of maternal pursuit of intrinsic goals but it did so in an interesting direction: child-invested contingent self-esteem dampened associations between maternal pursuit of intrinsic goals and the promotion of intrinsic goals. This finding suggests that maternal child-invested contingent self-esteem hampers the contribution of maternal intrinsic goals: when mothers personally value intrinsic goals yet have their self-worth invested in the child's achievements, they are *less* likely to be perceived as promoting intrinsic goals towards their child. This may be the case because mothers scoring high on child-invested contingent self-esteem think that the pursuit of intrinsic goals by their child is unlikely to yield direct recognition and visible success, outcomes aspired by these mothers to bolster their self-esteem.

Another explanation for this finding is that it is driven by our specific measure of child-invested contingent self-esteem, which focuses on the degree to which parents' self-worth depends on children's achievements. Most of these achievements may be interpreted in an "extrinsic" way, referring to children's good grades and eventually their capacity to obtain well-paid and prestigious jobs. An important question, however, is whether parents' self-esteem could also depend on the child's achievement of intrinsic goals, in which case child-invested contingent self-esteem may actually activate (rather than reduce) the promotion of intrinsic goals. Although this possibility merits investigation, we predict that most often parents promote intrinsic goals not to increase their own self-worth but because they see value in these goals for the child's healthy development. This prediction is based on the finding that the personal pursuit of extrinsic goals is typically regulated on the basis of controlled and pressuring motives (including self-worth concerns) and that intrinsic goals are typically regulated on the basis of autonomous or volitional motives (i.e., because people deeply endorse these goals and personally value their importance; e.g., Sheldon et al., 2004).

Limitations and directions for future research

One obvious and important limitation is that this study included only mothers. Extant research has shown that dynamics involved in parental goal promotion (Duriez, Soenens, et al., 2007; Duriez, Vansteenkiste, et al., 2007) and child-invested contingent self-esteem (e.g., Wuyts et al., *in press*) are generally similar for mothers and fathers. Still, it remains important to replicate the current findings in a sample of fathers. A second limitation is the modest response rate among the mothers (63%). Although there was no significant difference between adolescents of participating and non-participating mothers in their report of mothers' promotion of goals, we do not know if the two groups of mothers differed in their personal goal pursuit or contingent self-esteem. Related to this, future research would do well to control for social desirability, particularly with regard to constructs reported by parents only. A third limitation is the cross-sectional design. Although we assumed that maternal child-invested contingent self-esteem and personal goal pursuit were antecedents of adolescent-perceived maternal goal promotion (and subsequent developmental outcomes), our study cannot speak to the direction of effects in these associations. Possibly, parents themselves are also affected by the type of goals pursued by children and their self-worth might become fragile as a consequence of the importance attached by children to extrinsic goals. Future longitudinal research can address this possibility. Such research is also needed to examine the long-term consequences of parental promotion of intrinsic and extrinsic goals.

More generally, this study is the first to provide evidence for an interaction between mothers' own goals and their child-invested contingent self-esteem in the prediction of the promotion of goals. As such, these findings are in need of replication. Future research may also broaden the scope of antecedents of parental promotion of extrinsic goals. For instance, Kasser (2011) has shown that countries differ considerably in terms of whether extrinsic or intrinsic goals are emphasized at the cultural level and that these differences are related to nation-level differences in well-being. Given these findings, it seems important to examine whether parents are more inclined to invest their self-worth in their children's achievement in countries where extrinsic values are more salient at the societal level. Another important aim for future research is to unravel the mechanism accounting for the effect of the combination of child-invested contingent self-esteem and parents' personal pursuit of extrinsic goals on the promotion of extrinsic goals. One process that may play an important role is affective forecasting (Sheldon et al., 2010), which in the context of parental goals means that parents may have overly optimistic expectations about the degree of happiness and success that will be associated with the pursuit and attainment of extrinsic goals by their children.

Conclusion

The combination of maternal child-invested contingent self-esteem and maternal personal pursuit of extrinsic goals appeared to be the most risky cocktail for the promotion of extrinsic goals and subsequent adolescent SDO. When mothers themselves held extrinsic goals and at the same time strived to demonstrate their worth through the child's accomplishments, they were most likely to be perceived as promoting extrinsic goals towards their child. Adolescent-

perceived promotion of extrinsic goals, in turn, was related to adolescent SDO. Although some mothers may believe that the promotion of extrinsic goals paves their adolescent's way for a happy and successful life, this study, together with past research, indicates that the promotion of extrinsic goals comes at an important social cost for adolescents' development.

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