

PSYCHOLOGY^{AND} CONSUMER CULTURE

The Struggle for a
Good Life in a
Materialistic
World

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2

MATERIALISTIC VALUES: THEIR CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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Homo sapiens have long distinguished themselves by their use of and desire for material objects, and human social environments have long worked to support these tendencies to consume. It seems safe to say, however, that never before in humankind's history has our drive toward materialism and consumption been afforded such opportunity for expression and satisfaction. Although this can be seen in the extravagance of wealthy individuals purchasing \$6,000 shower curtains (Hales, 2002) and \$20 million rocket excursions into outer space (Wines, 2002), more remarkable is the extent to which high levels of consumption are within reach of even the average person living in a Western society. Almost everyone in the United States owns a telephone, television set, and an automobile (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001), and the homes in which the lower middle class live have comforts like plumbing, heat, and air conditioning that far exceed those enjoyed by royalty 1,000 years ago. Consumption also plays an enormous role in most individuals' leisure activities, be it through watching commercial television, wandering the shopping malls, or surfing the Internet. And, wherever we go, our ears

and eyes are bombarded with material messages encouraging us to purchase more and more.

Upon accepting the fact that most humans currently live in a culture of consumption, one might ask "Why? Why do we have this culture?" An economist might reply that a culture of consumption is a necessary outgrowth of the advanced capitalistic economic systems under which most Westerners live, because these systems require the production and purchase of ever-increasing amounts of goods. A historian might explain how consumer culture emerged from the industrial age or even earlier, how modern advertising developed and gained prominence, and how particular captains of capitalism changed society by the force of their wills. A political scientist might note the multiple ways in which governmental structures maintain and support the power and interest of businesses to earn money through the sale of goods and services, and how these same structures encourage consumption on the part of citizens.

Each of these explanations, as well as others which might be offered from other disciplines, meaningfully elucidates aspects of the culture of consumption. From a psychological perspective, however, they remain less than satisfying, for they do not consider the ways in which individual humans simultaneously create and are created by this culture. As recognized by most sociocultural and anthropological approaches (Barnard, 2000), in order for some dimension of a culture to exist, it must be supported by individual human beings who follow the beliefs and practices of that culture; at the same time, the individual humans who support that aspect of culture are themselves shaped by the beliefs and practices that they have internalized. Take, for example, the particular aspect of culture known as religion. In order for any religion to exist, a reasonably large number of individuals must believe in the tenets and engage in the practices it espouses. If everyone stopped going to its religious centers, practicing the way of life it encourages, and reading its texts, the religion would die out, as have many religions in the past. At the same time that a religion is created by its followers, its followers are shaped by the religion. When individuals believe in the ideas of the religion and engage in its practices, their identities, personalities, and behaviors are molded in particular and profound ways.

If we look at contemporary culture, we see that the media propagate messages to purchase items and experiences, that myths are passed on that say that America is the land of opportunity, that governments work to support capitalism, that business people make decisions on the basis of how to maximize profit, and that consumers amass debt to buy products such as sport utility vehicles and large-screen television sets. These actions can be viewed from many angles, but they must also be understood as reflecting the combined actions and beliefs of a large number of individuals who have internalized the capitalistic, consumeristic worldview. Thus, the culture of consumption is, in part, a shared worldview lodged within the psyches of the

members of the culture. However, we must also recognize that living in a culture of consumption means that individuals are exposed to enormous pressures to conform to the beliefs and values of this culture. Accordingly, the worldview in a society shapes the identities and lives of its members, leading them to hold the goals and engage in the practices (e.g., watching commercial television, working for a paycheck, shopping at the mall, investing in the stock market) that support the culture.

In this chapter, we refer to the culture of consumption's constellation of aims, beliefs, goals, and behaviors as a *materialistic value orientation* (MVO). From our perspective, an MVO involves the belief that it is important to pursue the culturally sanctioned goals of attaining financial success, having nice possessions, having the right image (produced, in large part, through consumer goods), and having a high status (defined mostly by the size of one's pocketbook and the scope of one's possessions). We focus here on two questions: First, "What leads people to care about and 'buy into' materialistic values and consumption behavior?" And second, "What are the personal, social, and ecological consequences of having a strong MVO?"

We use as our point of reference a theory of materialistic values (Kasser, 2002) that is grounded in humanistic (Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1964), existential (Fromm, 1976), and organismic (Ryan & Deci, 2000b) thought, as well as in substantial empirical data. We propose that an MVO develops through two main pathways: (a) from experiences that induce feelings of insecurity and (b) from exposure to social models that encourage materialistic values. We further show that when materialistic values become relatively central to a person's system of values, personal well-being declines because the likelihood of having experiences that satisfy important psychological needs decreases. Finally, we demonstrate that an MVO encourages behaviors that damage interpersonal and community relations, as well as the ecological health of the planet.

HOW DO PEOPLE BECOME MATERIALISTIC?

Research suggests two main pathways toward the development of an MVO. First, experiences that undermine the satisfaction of psychological needs can cause individuals to orient toward materialism as one type of compensatory strategy intended to countermand the distressing effects of feelings of insecurity. Second, materialistic models and values exert more direct influences on the development of an MVO through the processes of socialization, internalization, and modeling. In the next two sections, we review evidence supporting each of these propositions, and in the third section we show how interactions between the two pathways can explain the effectiveness of advertising and the spread of materialism in previously noncapitalistic societies.

Insecurity

According to our model, a strong MVO is one way in which people attempt to compensate for worries and doubts about their self-worth, their ability to cope effectively with challenges, and their safety in a relatively unpredictable world. For example, large salaries and the possession of material goods may be especially valued if they represent an attempt to gain approval and acceptance that is otherwise felt to be lacking. A strong MVO may also develop in situations where people feel that wealth, possessions, image, and status enhance their likelihood of meeting basic needs for safety and sustenance (i.e., when they are seen as necessary for continued survival).

One primary source of insecurity, in our view, involves exposure to environments and experiences that frustrate or block the fulfillment of people's basic psychological needs, such as those for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000b), as well as for safety (Maslow, 1954). A growing body of research suggests that individuals become more materialistic when they experience environmental circumstances that do not support such psychological needs. As reviewed below, both people's proximal interpersonal environments and their more distal socioeconomic and cultural environments are important to need fulfillment and, consequently, to the development of a strong MVO.

Several studies have explored the effects of family environments, showing that parental styles and practices that poorly satisfy children's needs are also associated with an increased MVO in children. For example, Kasser, Ryan, Zax, and Sameroff (1995) reported that late adolescents¹ focused on financial success aspirations (in comparison to self-acceptance, affiliation, or community feeling aspirations) were more likely to have mothers who made more negative and fewer positive emotional expressions about the adolescents and who described their own parenting styles as involving less warmth and democracy, along with greater control. Other studies have shown that children tend to be more materialistic when they have less frequent communication with their parents (Moore & Moschis, 1981), when their parents are over-involved, highly punitive, or quite lax in the structure they provide (Cohen & Cohen, 1996), and when they perceive their parents as less supportive of their desires for autonomy (Williams, Cox, Hedberg, & Deci, 2000). Each of these parental characteristics is likely to cause feelings of insecurity, which may be compensated for by the development of a strong MVO.

Divorce is another family experience that can interrupt the satisfaction of children's psychological needs, because it often leads to decreased stability, exposure to more hostility, and increased worries about being loved. Not surprisingly, then, Rindfleisch, Burroughs, and Denton (1997) found that

¹Most were approximately age 18.

materialistic young adults are more likely to have divorced parents. The authors' investigation of mediational reasons for this finding led them to conclude that "it is the diminution of interpersonal resources such as love and affection, rather than financial resources, that links family disruption and materialism" (p. 321), a statement quite consistent with our framework. Of course, the high rate of divorce in the United States puts many children at risk of developing materialistic values.

Although characteristics of one's family environment bear consistent relationships with later material values, the broader institutional and cultural structures within which individuals live can also be more or less supportive of psychological needs. To take an obvious example, blatant political oppression clearly undermines the autonomy of those who are subject to it, just as constant warfare and dire poverty undermine feelings of safety and security. Research shows that certain characteristics of one's culture and society can foster insecurities and therefore influence the extent to which people espouse an MVO.

The relation between economic deprivation and materialism is currently the most well-researched of these social dimensions. Both Cohen and Cohen (1996) and Kasser et al. (1995) have shown that highly materialistic teens have experienced greater socioeconomic disadvantages, as measured by parental socioeconomic and educational status, as well as by neighborhood quality. From a broader perspective, the political scientist Inglehart has reviewed findings showing that national economic indicators can influence materialism. For example, poorer countries tend to be more materialistic than richer countries, generations raised in bad economic times are more materialistic than those raised in prosperous times, and national recessions generally increase people's materialism (Abramson & Inglehart, 1995). Like us, Inglehart has suggested that poor economic conditions cause feelings of deprivation or insecurity and that people may compensate for these feelings by focusing on materialistic goals. Poverty alone may not lead to the adoption of materialistic goals, as seen in the case of religious novitiates who give up their possessions; as described below, however, poverty may work in combination with social modeling to produce a strong MVO.

Although correlational studies relating MVO to characteristics of familial and social environments support our thesis, they cannot provide firm causal conclusions. Experimental evidence in favor of our viewpoint has been obtained by Kasser and Sheldon (2000), who manipulated feelings of insecurity by asking research participants to write essays about either death or music. Those whose mortality had been made more salient (i.e., whose insecurity had been raised) reported higher expectations for their salary and spending 15 years into the future (Study 1) and became greedier in a social-dilemma game (Study 2; see chap. 8, this volume, for more on death and consumer society).

In summary, then, both correlational studies and experimental manipulations of insecurity point to the same conclusion: When people experience

situations that do not support the satisfaction of their basic psychological needs, the resultant feelings of insecurity may lead them to adopt a more materialistic outlook on life as a way to compensate for these feelings. Perhaps materialistic pursuits have been evolutionarily ingrained within humans as a way to feel more secure and safe (e.g., Hungry? Get food. Being attacked? Grab a club.), and this tendency is especially heightened under the current climate of cultural consumerism.

Exposure to Materialistic Models and Values

A second pathway to the development of materialism involves exposure to materialistic models and values. From the time they are born, people receive implicit and explicit messages endorsing the importance of money and possessions. These endorsements take the form of parental values, the materialistic lifestyles of family members and peers, and the materialistic messages frequently found in popular culture, such as in the media. People often accept such messages, take on materialistic goals, and strive to attain them, as humans have a fundamental tendency to adopt ambient cultural and familial values and behavioral regulations, a process referred to as *internalization* (Ryan & Connell, 1989).

Evidence suggests that children do indeed take on the materialistic values of those in their social surroundings. Kasser et al.'s (1995) study of mothers and their adolescent children showed that when mothers thought it was highly important to pursue financial success, their children generally expressed the same value. Ahuvia and Wong (1998) assessed the extent to which people perceived their parents, peers, heroes, various other adult figures, and the local community as valuing materialist social values in comparison to values such as self-expression, belonging, aesthetic satisfaction, and quality of life. Individuals who reported growing up in a materialist social milieu were more likely to be materialistic themselves. Although additional research is required to expand on this work (especially through exploration of the influence of same-age peers), the results of these two studies do indeed suggest that people often internalize the materialistic orientations of the salient models around them.

Another extremely pervasive source of materialistic messages is popular culture and the media, epitomized by commercial television. Besides the sitcoms, dramas, and game shows with subtexts clearly extolling materialism (e.g., *The Price Is Right*, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*), television is replete with advertisements painstakingly crafted to promote consumption (Richins, 1995). Advertisers have at their disposal many techniques designed to convince people to purchase their products. For example, they show products being used by people who are famous or extremely attractive (often both), or by someone who obtains some sort of social reward by using the product. The ads also display products amidst a level of wealth that is unattainable by the

average consumer and often show idealized versions of life within the context of the advertisement. Such tactics create associations between the product and desirable outcomes and also teach consumptive behavior through modeling (Bandura, 1971).

Given the purpose of these techniques and the ubiquitousness of these messages, it is not surprising that studies consistently show a positive correlation between television watching and materialism. This has been reported across different age groups (Kasser & Ryan, 2001; Rahtz, Sirgy, & Meadow, 1988, 1989; Sheldon & Kasser, 1995) and in samples drawn from a number of different countries (Cheung & Chan, 1996; Khanna & Kasser, 2001). Notably, however, the causal pathway of these studies is ambiguous. Although it is certainly likely that television watching may increase an MVO, it is also possible that television may be more appealing to those with a high MVO because it may validate their worldview, present new ways to pursue materialistic goals, and help them escape from the anxiety associated with insecurity. Future research applying insights derived from the literature on television and aggression may help to untangle the relations between television and an MVO.

Effective Advertising and the Spread of Capitalism

Whereas the two pathways described above may each make independent contributions toward the development of an MVO, they may also interact. That is, people experiencing higher levels of insecurity may be more susceptible to the influence of environmental messages concerning the benefits of acquisitiveness, which may in turn make them feel increasingly insecure, and on and on in a vicious cycle. Below, we briefly describe how this interaction might explain the effectiveness of advertising and the spread of capitalistic ideology. (See part IV of this volume for discussions of similar dynamics in youth.)

Richins (1995) has noted that ads are often constructed to engender upward social comparisons that make viewers feel uncomfortably inferior. For example, women exposed to perfume ads with highly attractive models report less satisfaction with their own appearance (Richins, 1991). In our view, these comparisons heighten feelings of personal insecurity, which may then activate compensatory mechanisms designed to alleviate negative feelings. Although many compensatory methods may serve this purpose, the likelihood of choosing a materialistic or consumption-oriented method is increased by the fact that the ads themselves always present a very clear option for feeling better about oneself: buy the product! Moreover, compared to those who care little for materialistic pursuits, people with a strong MVO are more concerned with social comparison (Sirgy, 1998), are more likely to compare themselves with images of wealthy people (Richins, 1992), strongly endorse wanting to make money in order to prove that they are worthwhile

people in comparison to others (Srivastava, Locke, & Bortol, 2001), and are more susceptible to normative influence, such that their buying habits are more influenced by wanting others to approve of their purchases (Schroeder & Dugal, 1995). Each of these factors not only makes materialistic individuals more likely to be attentive to and be influenced by materialistic messages but also might maintain and reinforce the feelings of insecurity that underlie an MVO. This makes such individuals even more susceptible to the craft of advertising.

The interaction of forces promoting insecurity and encouraging materialism can also partially explain how capitalistic, free-market economies have been spreading to formerly communist and socialist nations and to less economically developed nations (Ryan et al., 1999; Sen, 1999). Several factors relevant to our discussion thus far are at work here. First, as is clear from the anthropological literature, marketers intentionally attempt to foster consumeristic desires in developing countries (O'Barr, 1994). As television watching and advertising make their way into new markets, potential consumers are flooded with new models suggesting that a materialistic way of life brings happiness and with new messages suggesting that viewers have not "made it" unless they own the right products (Mander, 1991). Inevitably, these messages are internalized to some degree and have the net effect of promoting materialism.

Second, market capitalism strikes at the heart of family structure, decreasing resources that provide for quality caretaking and breaking apart a sense of relatedness with one's extended family and community (see Schwartz, 1994). As described above, less attention and nurturance provided to children produces greater insecurity, which in turn increases the likelihood that they will develop an MVO. Furthermore, the breakdown of the family may lead to increased materialism, as is shown in Rindfleisch et al.'s (1997) finding that children of divorced parents are likely to become more materialistic than children whose parents are not divorced.

Finally, free-market economies lead to the concentration of wealth in relatively few hands. The disparities that arise between subgroups within a culture or between different nations have become increasingly noticeable with the spread of modern media to more and more of the world's citizens. The salience of these disparities is likely to fuel increased social comparison, which, as we have noted above, is associated with increased materialism. Furthermore, such upward social comparison is likely to increase feelings of insecurity among the poor when combined with the dominant message that people are worthwhile to the extent that they own many prestigious goods and are financially successful. Thus, the poor, who already may be vulnerable to materialistic messages as a result of their relative lack of opportunities for need satisfaction, may be subject to yet another factor promoting an MVO.

MATERIALISM AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

Having specified some of the processes by which the values, goals, and beliefs of the culture of consumption become part of people's psyches, we now describe some of the consequences of holding an MVO. As we shall see, people who express a strong MVO report a number of experiences, feelings, and behaviors that are associated with a diminished quality of life.

A growing body of research demonstrates that people who strongly orient toward values such as money, possessions, image, and status report lower subjective well-being (see Kasser, 2002, for a fuller review). For example, Kasser and Ryan (1993, 1996, 2001) have shown that when people rate the relative importance of extrinsic, materialistic values as high in comparison to other pursuits (e.g., self-acceptance, affiliation, community feeling), lower quality of life is also reported. Late adolescents with a strong MVO report lower self-actualization and vitality, as well as more depression and anxiety. They also are rated by interviewers as lower in social productivity and general functioning and as higher in conduct disorders (Kasser & Ryan, 1993). Kasser and Ryan (1996) replicated this association between an MVO and lower well-being in a sample of adults, and Kasser and Ryan (1996, 2001) have demonstrated that an MVO in college students is positively associated with narcissism, physical symptoms, and drug use and negatively associated with self-esteem and quality of relationships. Sheldon and Kasser (1995, 1998, 2001) have presented similar results in college students and adults when using a mixed idiographic-nomothetic means of measuring value orientation, as well as measures of well-being including life satisfaction and affective experience.

Other researchers have reported similar results. Cohen and Cohen (1996) found that adolescents who admire others because of their possessions are at an increased risk for personality disorders. Indeed, placing a high priority on being rich was associated with virtually every Axis I and Axis II diagnosis assessed in their research. Materialism scales designed by Beik (1985) and Richins and Dawson (1992) have shown consistently negative associations with happiness and life satisfaction in several studies (see Sirgy's, 1998, review and Wright & Larsen's, 1993, meta-analysis). Finally, the negative associations between materialism and well-being have been replicated in samples of Australian (Saunders & Munro, 2000), English (Chan & Joseph, 2000), German (Schmuck, Kasser, & Ryan, 2000), Romanian (Frost, 1998), Russian (Ryan et al., 1999), South Korean (Kim, Kasser, & Lee, 2003), and Singaporean (Kasser & Ahuvia, 2002) students.

Although various explanations have been tendered for the negative associations between subjective well-being and an MVO (see, e.g., chap. 3, this volume), Kasser (2002) has presented an argument derived from needs-based theories. In brief, we posit that happiness and well-being, or *eudaimo-*

nia (Ryan & Deci, 2000a), derive largely from the satisfaction of psychological needs for security, competence, connection to others, and autonomy. As has already been shown above, people with a strong MVO have had experiences that poorly satisfied their needs for safety and security, and thus the lower well-being associated with an MVO is in part a consequence of the feelings of insecurity which led to the adoption of a materialistic lifestyle in the first place. However, an MVO is not just a "symptom" of unhappiness; it also leads people to engage in behaviors and have experiences that do a relatively poor job of satisfying their psychological needs. In this vein, we present a brief overview of research showing that the remaining three psychological needs are relatively poorly satisfied in people with a strong MVO. (See Kasser, 2002, for a fuller exposition.)

Competence

Evidence that people with a strong MVO have difficulty fulfilling their need for feeling competent comes from several sources. First, a strong MVO is associated with lower self-esteem (Kasser & Ryan, 2001) and greater narcissism (Kasser & Ryan, 1996), belying a contingent, unstable sense of self-esteem. Second, as mentioned above, people with a strong MVO are particularly concerned with social comparisons (Sirgy, 1998) and the opinions of others (Schroeder & Dugal, 1995), both of which can often lead them to feel badly about themselves. Third, successful pursuit of materialistic goals does little to improve people's happiness and well-being (Diener, Sandvik, Seidlitz, & Diener, 1993; Sheldon & Kasser, 1998). Thus, even when people are quite competent at attaining materialistic goals, we believe that this type of success rarely provides a deeply satisfying feeling of "true self-esteem" (Deci & Ryan, 1995).

Relatedness

The satisfaction of relatedness needs may also be substantially undermined by an MVO. For example, Kasser and Ryan (2001) have shown that the love relationships and the friendships of those with a strong MVO are relatively short and are characterized more by emotional extremes and conflict than by trust and happiness. Several factors probably contribute to this phenomenon. For one, people with a strong MVO tend to place less importance on values such as affiliation (Kasser & Ryan, 1993) and benevolence (Schwartz, 1996), thus decreasing the likelihood that they will seek out experiences of closeness with others. In addition, the attitudes expressed in an MVO can "bleed over" into one's relationships, leading others to be treated in an objectifying manner. Compared to those with a low MVO, people who are strongly focused on materialistic values report less empathy (Sheldon & Kasser, 1995), agree that they more often use their friends to get ahead in life

(Khanna & Kasser, 2001), score higher in Machiavellianism (McHoskey, 1999), and are more likely to compete than cooperate with their friends (Sheldon, Sheldon, & Osbaldiston, 2000). None of these styles of relating to others contribute to the close, interpersonally trusting, and warm relationships necessary for the deep satisfaction of relatedness needs.

Autonomy

The final need undermined by an MVO is autonomy—the feeling of choice, ownership, and deep engagement concerning one's activities. People with a strong MVO are less focused on having choices than they are on obtaining rewards (Kasser & Ryan, 1993). Furthermore, Sheldon and Kasser (1995, 1998, 2001) have demonstrated that an MVO is associated with pursuing one's goals because of feelings of internal guilt and external pressure rather than for reasons of fun or wholehearted identification. Srivastava et al. (2001) presented parallel results, showing that business students and entrepreneurs with a strong MVO report more concern with making money for reasons of internal and external pressure. Specifically, high materialistic values were associated with wanting to overcome self-doubt (e.g., "prove I am not a failure") and to appear positive in social comparisons (e.g., "to have a house and cars that are better than those of my neighbors"). Such poor self-regulation works against the satisfaction of the need for autonomy (Ryan, 1995).

A final problem concerning autonomy is that a strong MVO often leads people to focus more on rewards than on the inherent fun of the activities in which they are engaged, which in turn can undermine feelings of intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1971). Indeed, focusing on money is associated with less engagement and more alienation in one's leisure, work, and relationship activities (Khanna & Kasser, 2001; see also chap. 6, this volume).

MATERIALISTIC VALUES AND THE WELFARE OF SOCIETY

Although it is disconcerting to know that the ideology encouraged by our culture of consumption undermines the personal well-being and need satisfaction of those who accept its values, a strong MVO also leads people to engage in behaviors and hold attitudes damaging to our communities and to the world's ecological health (see chaps. 4 & 5, this volume).

A healthy community is based on people helping one another, on cooperation, and on mutual trust. Several pieces of evidence suggest, however, that a strong MVO is associated with less "civil" behavior. For example, an MVO tends to conflict with the desire to help the world be a better place and to take care of others (Cohen & Cohen, 1996; Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996, 2001; Schwartz, 1996), decreasing the likelihood that people oriented toward mate-

rialism will behave pro-socially. Indeed, research shows that people strongly focused on materialistic values are also lower in social interest, pro-social behavior, and social productivity and are more likely to engage in anti-social acts (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; McHoskey, 1999). That they have more manipulative tendencies (McHoskey, 1999) and compete more than cooperate (Sheldon & McGregor, 2000; Sheldon et al., 2000) provides further evidence that an MVO undermines what is best for the whole community.

An MVO can also lead people to care less about environmental issues and to engage in more environmentally destructive behaviors and attitudes. Materialistic values conflict with values to protect the environment (Abramson & Inglehart, 1995; Schwartz, 1996) and are associated with more negative attitudes toward the environment and fewer environmentally friendly behaviors (Richins & Dawson, 1992; Saunders & Munro, 2000). An MVO has also been associated with increased greed and heightened consumption in simulated social dilemmas involving ecological issues (Sheldon & McGregor, 2000).

In summary, the culture of consumption, as represented by an MVO, not only degrades psychological health, but spreads seeds that may lead to its own destruction. Materialistic values not only heighten our vulnerability to serious social and environmental problems, but also undermine our ability to work cooperatively in finding solutions to these problems.

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS

Our ideas about how materialistic values are inculcated into individuals, and the data showing how an MVO diminishes personal, social, and ecological well-being, have a number of implications for theoretical, clinical, and social change issues.

Theory

In psychology, the dominant theory behind much empirical research and clinical work is a behavioral or cognitive viewpoint, which suggests that striving for important social rewards, obtaining one's goals (whatever they may be) and integrating into society (whatever its values) are key features of psychological well-being. The evidence presented here, in contrast, shows that when people focus on obtaining rewards, when they concern themselves with materialistic goals, and when they espouse the values of the dominant consumer culture, the result is lower well-being. From the needs-based theory we use, influenced by humanistic and organismic assumptions, these results make sense; an MVO reflects and exacerbates people's alienation from their natural strivings to grow, actualize, and connect with others. Because behavioral and cognitive perspectives typically do not contain such theoret-

ical constructs as basic psychological needs and organismic actualization and integration, the results reviewed above are seemingly at odds with such viewpoints on humans and their well-being. Furthermore, behavioral and cognitive perspectives have few theoretical constructs to explain how feelings of insecurity might lead to the internalization of an MVO, because their viewpoints typically only acknowledge the direct roles of learning and imitation in the internalization of values, not more "dynamic" pathways.

We raise these theoretical points in the hope of demonstrating how the study of the culture of consumption can address academic problems of concern to theorists and researchers. That is, the literature reviewed above, inspired by humanistic, organismic, and existential viewpoints, suggests the need for some important revisions to mainstream psychology's dominant paradigm concerning human motivation and well-being.

Increasing Personal Well-Being

Psychologists have long played an important role in helping people make changes in their personal lives to improve their well-being. All too often, however, the focus has been on a client's symptoms, with the broader scope of the person's problems, indeed, the person's whole lifestyle, being ignored (see chap. 9, this volume). The research we have presented shows that a number of problems that clinicians encounter (e.g., narcissism, anxiety, depression, conduct disorder, drug and alcohol problems) may be involved with a strong MVO. Thus, clinical work may benefit from the exploration of clients' value orientations to determine whether they are indeed focused on money, possessions, image, and status. If so, this MVO may signal poor past need satisfaction and may be leading clients into experiences that undermine the satisfaction of basic needs in the present.

The chapters in part III of this volume discuss in more detail how therapists might deal with clinical issues related to the culture of consumption, but here we briefly suggest the following. First, clients may benefit from exploring how past insecurities may have led them to develop an MVO and from discussing how other value orientations may be more satisfying. Second, helping clients clarify what is important to them and what guides their decisions may help them to see how they have been seduced by cultural consumption messages. Third, it may be useful to point out to clients how they continue to maintain an MVO, believing they will finally be happy when they have more money or higher status, even though the evidence from their personal lives (and from scientific studies) suggests the emptiness of this pursuit. By helping clients to see the stresses and dissatisfactions inherent in their acceptance of these cultural messages, they may be able to break the vicious cycles of materialism.

If clinicians succeed in helping clients disengage from their MVO, different values must take their place. Research shows that when people are

focused on intrinsic values such as self-acceptance, personal growth, affiliation, and helping others, better well-being is typically evidenced (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996; Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Effective clinical strategies from various theoretical perspectives could be developed to help shift people's value orientations from unsatisfying, materialistic ones to values and goals that may increase the likelihood of satisfying patients' needs and, thereby, their well-being.

Psychology and Social Change

The empirical skills and strengths of psychology might also be applied to counteract some of the problems inherent in the culture of consumption and in an MVO (see chap. 5, this volume). One might even argue that psychology bears a special responsibility to do so, given that our discipline's findings have often been used to support and encourage the culture of consumption. Many theoretical ideas from psychology have been "profitably" applied to business, advertising, and education to focus people more heavily on rewards and praise and to more efficiently direct workers, students, and consumers into the channels of action desired by consumer culture.

Psychology must begin, therefore, by acknowledging how it has helped spread the culture of consumption and now use these same skills to slow (and, may we hope, reverse) materialism. So, rather than studying how to convince children, adolescents, and adults to purchase products and hinge their self-worth on what they own, psychologists might turn to developing media literacy programs and other types of interventions that would increase individuals' resilience in the face of advertising. Rather than focusing on the use of rewards (supposedly) to improve student creativity and worker productivity, psychologists could give more attention to understanding how grades and paychecks can actually detract from people's intrinsic interest and performance in certain activities (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). Rather than ignoring the detrimental impact of people's values on the environment, psychologists might begin to study how to help individuals leave smaller "ecological footprints" and live materially simpler lifestyles. And rather than supporting the dominant cultural belief that happiness and well-being are the result of increasing personal and national economic growth, psychologists might begin to educate more broadly the public that increases in GNP and even one's own salary do not equate with increases in happiness (Diener et al., 1993; Myers, 2000) and that materialistic values actually undermine well-being.

Through such efforts, we may be able to weaken the hold that the capitalistic, consumeristic worldview has on both people's psyches and on the culture, and thereby improve the quality of life for humans, as well as the many other species inhabiting our planet.

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