Positive Adolescent Career Development: The Role of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Work Values

Andreas Hirschi

This longitudinal study of 268 Swiss adolescents, spanning across 8th grade, investigated the relation of intrinsic and extrinsic work values to positive career development in deciding, planning, and exploring. Results showed that girls reported more intrinsic and fewer extrinsic work values compared with boys. Students with an immigration background reported more extrinsic values than did students of Swiss nationality. When gender, nationality, and scholastic achievement were controlled, more general work value endorsement was a significant predictor of an above-average increase in career development over the course of the school year. Endorsement of more intrinsic but not extrinsic work values was related to positive career development.

The career development process in adolescence is related to better social adjustment and well-being and sets the stage for later career development across the life span (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2007; Super, 1990). For the purpose of the present study, positive career development was operationalized by achievement over time in three aspects: deciding, planning, and exploring. These three components are commonly regarded as some of the most fundamental characteristics of career adaptability and career choice readiness (Phillips & Blustein, 1994; Savickas, 1997).

For career development practice, it is essential to know what factors are predictive of such positive development in order to conduct specifically tailored interventions. Although many studies have investigated factors influencing the career decision-making process in adolescence, work values, as a potentially important influence on young adolescents' career development, have not yet received much empirical attention. Despite some recent advancements (e.g., Porfeli, 2007), values remain a largely understudied field within vocational psychology compared with, for example, vocational interests; this is despite the fact that several prominent theories of vocational choice and development (e.g., Brown, 1996; Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Super, 1990) regard values as one of the most important influences on career development, choice, and satisfaction.

According to Schwartz and Bilsky (1987), values can be defined as concepts or beliefs about desirable end states or behaviors that transcend...
specific situations, guide the selection or evaluation of behavior and events, and are ordered by their relative importance. Brown (1996) defined work values as the values that individuals believe should be satisfied as a result of their occupational work. As such, they are different from other frequently studied concepts in vocational psychology, such as personality traits or vocational interests, because of their evaluative nature about what is desirable and their important role in justifying behaviors and goals (Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004). Supporting the general importance of work values for positive career development, Schulenberg, Vondracek, and Kim (1993) showed that general work value endorsement can be seen as a general positive orientation to work. They reported that U.S. adolescents who showed more endorsement of different work values also displayed a higher degree of career development in terms of more career decidedness.

Different studies distinguish between different sets of work values, and there is no single established classification. However, many empirical studies and theories (e.g., Degenais, 1998; Ros, Schwartz, & Surkiss, 1999) distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic work values. The term extrinsic work values refers to values regarding the outcome or external factors of work, whereas the term intrinsic work values refers to the actual content of work (George & Jones, 1997). Lee (1997) and Post-Kammer (1987) investigated the relationship between extrinsic and intrinsic work values and state of career maturity as an indicator of positive career development among college and high school students, respectively. They found some significant positive correlations for intrinsic values and negative correlations for extrinsic values to career maturity but reported no strong relationship between the two. However, the studies did not longitudinally investigate the influence of work values on career development in early adolescence. There is extensive research literature in psychology (see Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, for a review) that shows intrinsic goals generally promote higher achievement in different domains compared with extrinsic goals, because of intrinsic goals' more adaptive promotion of learning and motivational processes. Values can be seen as enduring goals (Roberts & Robins, 2000), and it is therefore plausible that intrinsic but not extrinsic work values are positively related to achievement in terms of career development.

Present Study

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the relation of work values and positive career development. The study was conducted in Switzerland, where young adolescents must master a first important career decision-making process in eighth grade because of the strong focus on vocational education and training. At the end of eighth grade and beginning of ninth grade, adolescents are required to apply for an apprenticeship with a private firm in 1 of more than 200 available vocational educational opportunities. Within the Swiss educational system, this is a major educational/vocational transition for most students because only approximately one third of Swiss adolescents continue on to general high school, which prepares for a future college education (Bundesamt für Berufsbildung und Technologie, 2007). The present study traced the career development process during this crucial time period.
To account for potential alternative influences on career development and work values, I also assessed and controlled for gender, nationality, and scholastic achievement. Research has indicated that those factors correlate with career development (e.g., Creed, Patton, & Prideaux, 2007; Hirschi & Läge, 2007; Patton & Creed, 2001) and work values (e.g., Duffy & Sedlackeck, 2007; Johnson, 2002; Rottinghaus & Zytowski, 2006). Most research has shown that girls, students with nonimmigration backgrounds, and students with higher scholastic achievement score higher in career development variables and are also more likely to endorse intrinsic versus extrinsic work values compared with boys, students with immigration backgrounds, and students with lower scholastic achievement.

Method

Participants

Two hundred eighty-five students from a region in the German-speaking part of Switzerland participated in the study. At the first time of measurement, students were at the beginning of the eighth grade; at the second measurement point, students were at the end of the eighth grade. Seventeen students (6%) did not complete the measures at the second time because of their absence from class at the time of data collection. The missing students did not differ from the remaining ones on any of the measures assessed at the first time or in their distribution of gender, age, or nationality. Of the remaining 268 students (51% girls), 82% were of Swiss nationality, whereas the others had nationalities mainly from southeastern Europe, with only 3% coming from non-European countries. At the first time of measurement, their ages ranged from 12 to 16 years ($M = 14.06, SD = 0.70$).

Measures

Scholastic achievement. Students were asked to report their obtained scores in a standardized scholastic achievement test, which is applied at the beginning of the second semester in the eighth grade through their canton (state) of residence (see www.stellwerk-check.ch). The test is a web-based adaptive testing system that assesses competencies in Mathematics, Science, German, French, and English. For the purposes of this study, only the scores in Mathematics and German language were obtained because these two subjects are considered core competencies for the school-to-work transition (Moser, 2004). The sum score of the two subjects was taken as the indicator of a student’s scholastic achievement.

Work values. Students were presented a list of 5 intrinsic work values (variety at work, helping other people, independence at work, leadership and responsibility, and interesting work) and 5 extrinsic work values (high income, job security, fast and easy entry to job, leisure time besides work, and prestigious work) and were instructed to indicate the importance of each value for their future work role on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 4 (very important). The selection of the 10 included work values was in reference to the values proposed by Katz (1993) but also showed close similarity to other established
work value taxonomies (e.g., Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). The retrieved answers ranged in mean from 2.68 to 3.38 ($M = 3.0, SD = 0.24$) for the 10 values. A confirmatory factor analysis showed that the assignment of the work values to the two factors Intrinsic and Extrinsic provided an acceptable fit to the data, $\chi^2(32, N = 268) = 79.6, p < .001$; goodness-of-fit index = .95; comparative fit index = .82; root mean square error of approximation = .07; and standardized root mean square residual = .07. Cronbach’s alphas were .47 for intrinsic work values and .60 for extrinsic work values. Lower reliability estimates can be expected because of the small number of items and because the different value items represent different aspects regarding contents or outcomes of work, which by themselves do not need to be highly related (cf. Schmitt, 1996). As such, low alpha reliability does not need to be critical for the validity of the measure, which attempts to differentiate between more endorsement of one set of values over the other. The results in Table 1 present some support for the construct validity of the measures regarding their meaningful relation to career development variables.

**Career decidedness.** The German language adaptation of the Career Maturity Inventory (Crites, 1973; Seifert & Stangl, 1986), the Career Decidedness/Commitment Scale, was administered to participants. The scale consists of 12 items (e.g., “I don’t know exactly what to do in order to choose the right occupation”), and answers are indicated on a 4-point scale ranging from 4 (not true) to 1 (true). For the present study, scale scores were inverted so that higher scores indicate more career decidedness and commitment. Supporting the construct validity of the scale, studies showed a significant relationship to vocational identity (Hirschi & Läge, 2007), positive career attitudes, more active application for an apprenticeship after school, and more success in actually finding an apprenticeship (e.g., Bergmann, 1993). The Cronbach’s alpha of the scale within the present sample was .87 at the first measurement point and .88 at the second measurement point.

**Career planning.** The German language adaptation of the Career Development Inventory (CDI; Seifert & Eder, 1985; Super, Thompson, Lindeman, Jordaan, & Myers, 1981), the Career Planning Scale, was used. The scale consists of 22 items tapping time and efforts invested in career planning and knowledge about preferred occupations (e.g., “Talking about career plans with an adult who knows something about me”). Answers are given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very few) to 5 (a lot), with higher scores indicating more career planning. Studies supporting the construct validity of the scale showed, for example, positive relations to career knowledge and decidedness or likelihood to obtain an apprenticeship after school (e.g., Seifert, 1993; Seifert & Eder, 1985). Cronbach’s alphas were .89 and .90, respectively.

**Career exploration.** At the first measurement point, the Career Exploration Scale from the German language adaptation of the CDI was used. The scale consists of 26 items representing sources for gaining information regarding career development (e.g., my father, my teacher, job shadowing). Answers to these items are given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (no information) to 5 (very much information), with higher scores indicating more favorable career exploration attitudes. Studies supporting the construct validity of the scale showed positive
TABLE 1

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Note. Correlations for gender and nationality are Spearman rank correlations; all others are Pearson product–moment correlations. For coding of gender, girls = 0, boys = 1; for coding of nationality, Swiss = 0, other = 1. For gender and nationality, no means or standard deviations are possible. For scholastic achievement, the score is specifically derived and does not provide meaning in terms of means and standard deviations.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
relations to career knowledge and decidedness and to realizing the major one aspires in university (e.g., Seifert, 1993; Seifert & Eder, 1985); the Cronbach's alpha was .84. At the second measurement point, the amount of conducted career exploration during the career decision-making process was assessed with the Career Choice Exploration Scale (Hirschi, in press), which captures self-exploration (e.g., “Reflecting about personal interests and skills”) and environmental exploration (e.g., “Collecting information about different vocational options”), with answers indicating degree of engagement in these activities ranging from 1 (seldom/few) to 5 (very much/a lot) on a 5-point Likert scale. Supporting the construct validity, Hirschi (in press) reported significant relations to the CDI Career Exploration Scale, as well as to other personality and career development measures; the Cronbach’s alpha was .90. The rationale for applying two different exploration scales was that it seemed more appropriate to assess exploration in terms of favorable attitudes at the beginning of the career decision-making process, where not much actual exploration behavior could yet have been conducted, but assess such behavior specifically at the end of the process.

**Degree of career development.** A principal component score for the three career development variables was calculated for each measurement point and study participant by using principal-component factor analysis. The factor analysis confirmed the existence of one factor at both measurement points, explaining 60% and 69% variance among the three measures, respectively. A principal component score is the linear combination of the observed variables that maximizes the variance of each participant’s component score. This score has the advantage of providing a more parsimonious and possibly more reliable measure for degree of career development than three separate measures and also controls for increased possibility of Type I error in the analyses.

**Procedure**

All students completed the questionnaires during regular school hours in their school classes under the supervision of their classroom teacher. At the first measurement point, they indicated their gender, age, and nationality and received the measures for decidedness, career planning, and career exploration (CDI). At the second measurement point, they indicated their Mathematics and German test scores and completed the questionnaires tapping values, decidedness, planning, and the Career Choice Exploration Scale.

**Plan of Analysis and Data Preparation**

The research question of the present study was “What is the residualized gain effect of extrinsic and intrinsic work values on positive career development, taking into account sociodemographic variables?”

To estimate residualized gains in career development, I conducted a multiple hierarchical regression analysis, with the principal component score of degree of career development at Time 2 (T2) as the dependent variable. In Step 1, the principal component score for degree of career development at Time 1 (T1) was entered to control for the autoregressive effect of the measures and the stability of degree of career development over time. All variables entered in subsequent models thus
assessed residualized gains or interindividual change in degree of career development. This means that the variables in subsequent models were assessed to what degree they were related to change in positive career development above or below what would be expected given the average change of the participant group over time. This analysis was preferred to simple change scores because it was expected that all students in the group would show some increase in the career development variables over time, given the environmentally imposed career developmental task that took place in the eighth grade.

Gender, nationality, and scholastic achievement were included in the second model to act as control variables. In a third model, extrinsic work values were added to estimate their relation to career development. In the last model, intrinsic value endorsement was entered to assess the effect of intrinsic value endorsement above and beyond the already included variables. By controlling for the effect of extrinsic work values when assessing intrinsic work values, the analysis also accounts for the fact that value ratings promote positive relations among different values, which can be addressed by controlling for the individual level of general value endorsement (see Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004). Missing values due to incomplete or incorrect answers on single scales were analyzed using the procedures in SPSS (Version 16.0), which showed a random pattern of missing values. Missing scores were replaced with the expectation maximization method.

Results

Relation of Values and Career Development to Control Variables

Table 1 shows the correlations, means, and standard deviations of the applied measures and control variables. As expected, boys, non-Swiss students, and students with lower scholastic achievement scored higher on extrinsic work values than did girls, Swiss students, and higher achieving students. Girls also scored higher in intrinsic work values than did boys and Swiss students, and lower achieving students showed more general work value endorsement than did non-Swiss students and higher achieving students. No gender differences emerged regarding the career development variables, but Swiss students scored higher in career decidedness and exploration at T1 and higher in decidedness and planning at T2 compared with non-Swiss students. Higher scholastic achievement was negatively related to career exploration at both measurement points.

Test of the Research Question

As shown in Table 2, the measures at T1 significantly predicted career development at T2, indicating significant interindividual stability of the career development variables over time. The control variables predicted 4% variance, $\Delta R^2(3, 263) = 5.1, p = .002$, in the change in career development, with Swiss nationality and lower achievement being significantly related to an increase over time. Extrinsic work value endorsement did not predict significant additional variance, $\Delta R^2 = .006, \Delta F(1, 262) = 2.2$,
TABLE 2
Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Increase in Career Development (N = 268)

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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
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<th>Model 2</th>
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<th>Model 3</th>
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<td><strong>B</strong></td>
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<td><strong>B</strong></td>
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<td><strong>β</strong></td>
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<td><strong>B</strong></td>
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Note. Variables are reported for final model. For coding of gender, girls = 0, boys = 1; for coding of nationality, Swiss = 0, other = 1.
**p < .01. ***p < .001.

p = .142. As expected, more intrinsic work values explained a statistically significant additional amount of 3.3% variance above and beyond extrinsic work value endorsement and the control variables, ΔR²(1, 261) = 12.8, p < .001. Supporting the importance of general work value endorsement, extrinsic and intrinsic work values combined explained approximately 4% variance in positive career development above and beyond the control variables, ΔR²(2, 261) = 7.5, p = .001. The presented values for R² are indicators of effect size and practical significance, indicating a modest effect of work values.

Discussion
The goal of the present longitudinal study was to investigate whether intrinsic and extrinsic work value orientation has an influence on positive career development in early adolescence as measured by career decidedness, career planning, and career exploration. In line with other findings in the United States, which report a positive relation of value endorsement and career certainty (Schulenberg et al., 1993), the present study shows that overall level of importance to various work values is a significant predictor of more positive career development. As the results further show, this can be mainly attributed to the endorsement of intrinsic work values. This finding is in line with prior research, which shows a positive relation of intrinsic work values and motivation with various domains of functioning and achievement (e.g., Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). However, previous similar studies could not always confirm this relation (cf. Post-Kammer, 1987), but they did not assess the development of career variables longitudinally.

In addition, higher scholastic achievement negatively affected positive career development, possibly because of negative relations with career exploration. This might be explained by the fact that lower achieving students mostly attend different classes than do higher achieving stu-
students, where more focus is given to career preparation and more guided career exploration activities are offered by the teachers. Another finding is that students with an immigration background showed less progress, which indicates that they have more difficulties in reaching a high state of career preparation, possibly due to general increased difficulties in adjusting to educational structures and demands in their new country. Gender related significantly to work values with girls, endorsing more intrinsic but fewer extrinsic work values, compared with boys. However, gender was not strongly related to the career development variables, supporting the findings of other studies (see Patton & Creed, 2001, for a review).

Overall, the findings imply that young adolescents who place greater importance on various work values in general and to intrinsic values in particular show more positive career development before a major career/educational transition point. Although the effects were not large by conventional standards, it has to be noted that adolescent career development is influenced by a vast number of different factors. The finding that the single aspect of work value endorsement explains significant variance in its development above and beyond a number of sociodemographic variables is, therefore, certainly of some practical significance.

**Strengths and Limitations**

One major strength of the present study is that it applied a longitudinal design, which complements previous cross-sectional studies. As such, it was possible to relate work value endorsement to the development of career variables over time, which generally provides more meaningful insight into the relation of variables than what is possible with cross-sectional designs. Also, the study applied a multivariate measure of positive career development and work values that expands previous research.

Some limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the work value measure showed only limited reliability, which calls for subsequent research to replicate these results with more established and reliable work value measures. However, the fact that, despite low reliability, significant relations to career development were found supports the validity of the findings and of the work value measure of this study. Second, because of organizational reasons, work values could have been assessed only at the end of the process. Work values are clearly conceptualized as more stable and fundamental constructs than are the assessed developmentally conceived aspects of career development. However, the research design theoretically cannot rule out the possibility that the career decision-making process had, by itself, influenced work values. Hence, caution has to be applied on any causal interpretation of the results. Third, the use of different scales for career exploration at the two measurement points does not allow a direct comparison of increase on the score of this measure, which can also be regarded as a limiting factor. Fourth, as is the case with many other studies on career development, only self-reported measures were applied, which results in some limitations of the potential validity of the results due to shared method bias. The validity of self-reports is especially restricted for reported achievement scores (Kuncel, Crede, & Thomas, 2005), and these results

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should be treated with caution. Finally, the use of a convenience sample and the specific Swiss context imply limitations on generalizability of the results to other countries. It can be expected that the results are more valid for European countries with similar educational systems, such as Germany, Austria, or Denmark, where early entry into vocational education and training is the norm for many adolescents.

Implications for Counseling Practice
The fact that work values are not fixed personality traits opens possibilities for systematic career interventions targeting the change and/or increase of values. On the basis of the presented results, counselors could generally try to enhance the importance that young adolescents attach to intrinsic work aspects. Unfortunately, very little evaluation research is available on value change interventions. Practitioners could, however, receive important insights from the related literature on attitude change (Bernard, Maio, & Olson, 2003). This research implies that values could be changed by interventions that focus on actively processing and reflecting on information regarding the reasons for different values and challenging their adaptability. For example, teachers and counselors could engage students in discussions about what is personally important for one’s work and life. Critical reflections and discussions about how different aspects of work (e.g., pay, variety, helping others) would result in an increased quality of work and life could engage students in raising their awareness of and appreciation for the value of work.

References

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