

Materialistic Values and Environmental Challenges

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Values & Goals

- Guiding principles in life
- Help orient people to engage in particular behaviors
- Affect people's attitudes towards particular objects and policies
- Many different types of values and goals exist

Materialistic values

- Can purchase happiness
- Important to work and consume
- Financial profit and economic growth are main priorities
- Life is meaningful and people are successful to the extent they have money, possessions, and the right image

Measuring Materialism

- Survey methods (e.g., Belk, 1985, Richins & Dawson, 1992)
- Rate agreement with statements
 - Sample Items
 - My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.
 - I like to own things that impress people.
 - I like a lot of luxury in my life.
 - I would rather buy something I need than borrow it from someone else.

Measuring Materialism

- Values strategy (e.g., Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996)
- Rate many goals, guiding principles, (e.g., family, spirituality, fun, etc.)
- Sample materialistic items
 - You will have a job that pays well
 - You will have many expensive possessions
 - You will achieve the “look” you’ ve been after
 - You will be admired by many people
- Examine relative importance of goals

Ecological Damage



Ecological Attitudes

- Lower biophilia
- Less value on protecting the environment and having a world of beauty
- Less concern about effects of environmental damage on other people, animals, and future generations

Eco-behaviors - imaginary

- Studies of forest-management
- Higher materialism associated with more greedy feelings and harvesting more forest more quickly

Eco-Behaviors - Actual

- Fewer pro-environmental behaviors
 - Studies of US & UK adults and kids – riding bikes, recycling, reusing, turning off lights
- Fewer organic purchases in grocery store
- Higher Ecological Footprint
 - 400 N Americans – transportation, housing, food

Ecological Outcomes - National Level

- 20 wealthy nations
- Values for achievement, power, status, money, etc., associated with higher CO₂ emissions, after controlling for GDP/capita

Campaigning Implications

- #1 - Avoid encouraging or activating environmentally-damaging values
- #2 - Develop campaigns to eliminate the root causes of environmentally-damaging values
- #3 – Identify, encourage and activate environmentally-beneficial values

Goal Framing

- Students told that their peers highly valued power, status, and money aims later:
 - Rated similar aims as more important
 - Rated aims such as social justice and helping the environment as less important
- Thinking about money decreases helpfulness and charitable donations

Goal Framing

- Subjects - education students
- Asked to read a text on recycling framed as:
 - Would benefit community
 - Would save money
- Those with Materialistic frames:
 - Learned material less deeply
 - Were less likely to visit library to learn more
 - Were less likely to go on later trip to recycling plant

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Causes of Materialism

- Social Modeling
 - Higher if friends, parents, peers care
 - Higher if more watch television
 - Higher if live in neo-liberal capitalistic nation (US, UK vs. Germany, Austria)

Causes of Materialism

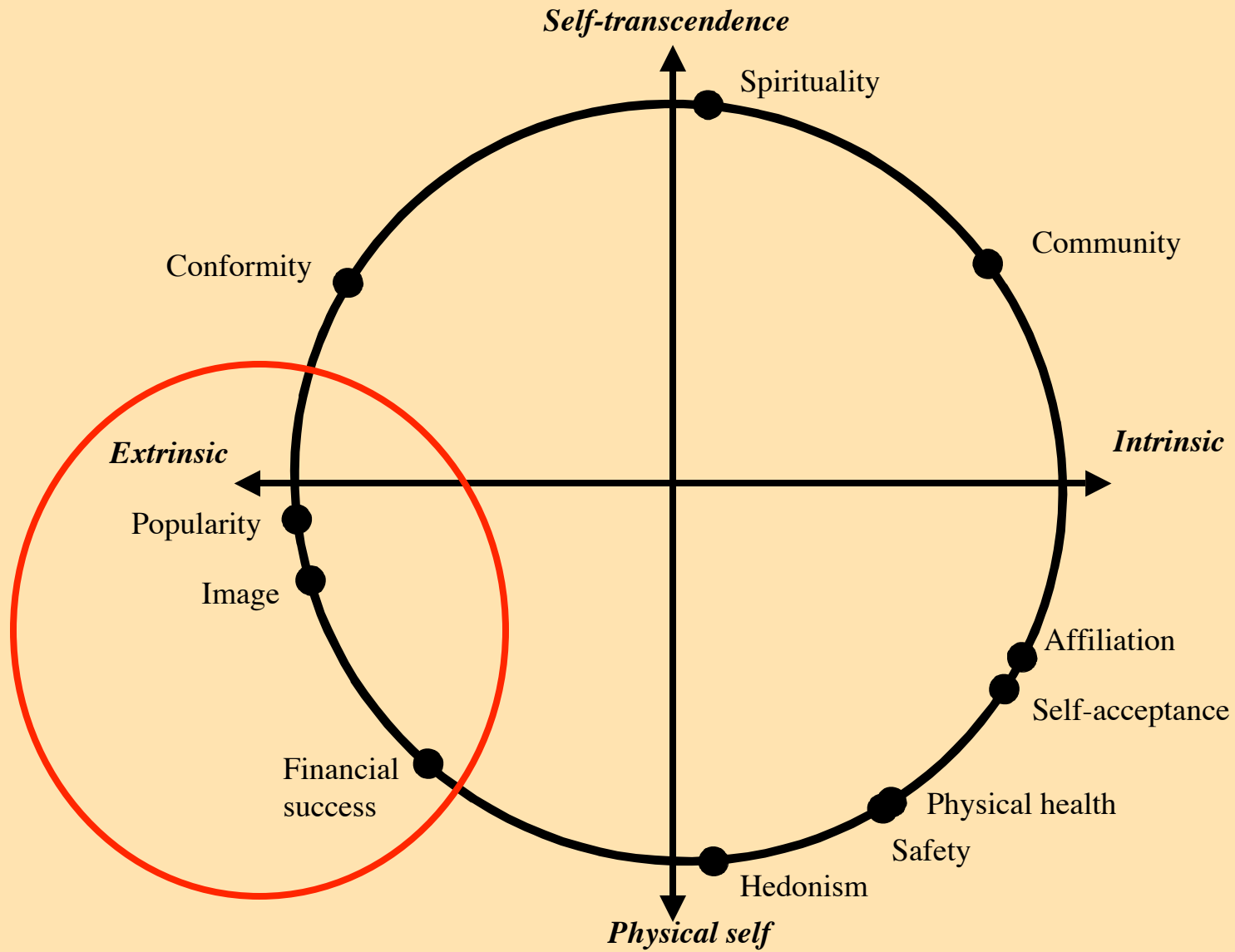
- Remove advertising from public places, schools, parks, etc.
- Remove tax subsidy for advertising

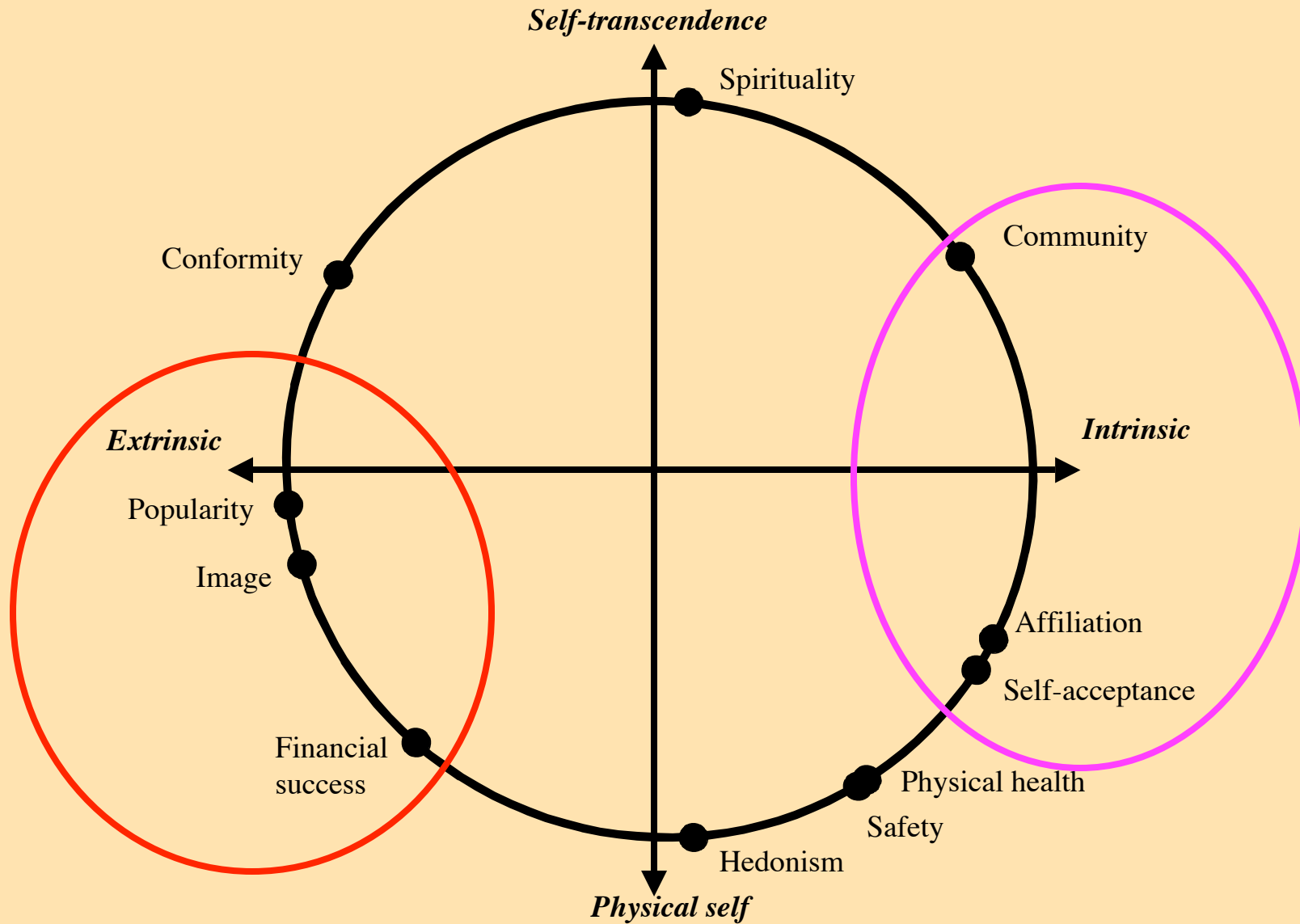
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Healthy Values

- Assessed aspirations in 11 domains
 - e.g., Spirituality, Hedonism, Affiliation, Health, etc.
- >1800 College students in 15 nations
- Circular Stochastic Modeling
 - Adjacent goals are consistent
 - Opposing goals are conflictual





Intrinsic Values

- Self-acceptance
“I will follow my interests and curiosity where they take me.”
- Affiliation
“I will express my love for special people.”
- Community Feeling
“I will help the world become a better place.”

Ecological Well-being



- More environmentally friendly behaviors
- Lower Ecological Footprint
- Less consumption in forest dilemma game

Healthy Values

- Support voluntary simplifiers, simplicity circles, etc.
- Promote indicators of progress that are not driven by profit and consumption, but that instead include intrinsic values

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