

# The Quiet Ego: Motives for Self-Other Balance and Growth in Relation to Well-Being

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**Abstract** The quiet ego is a way of construing the self that transcends egotism, not by neglecting the self but rather by facilitating a *balance* of concerns for the self and others as well as by facilitating the *growth* of the self and others. This study examines whether the Quiet Ego Scale (QES—Wayment et al. in J Happiness Stud 16:999–1033, 2015) correlates significantly with measures that specifically reflect balance and growth in terms of value orientations and motivation, and whether these values and motives can help explain the relation between QES and well-being. We randomly split our sample of 1117 college students into five groups (Ns ranged from 213 to 231) and examined the correlations between QES and measures of values and motives (Ego and Ecosystem Goals—Crocker and Canevello in J Personal Soc Psychol 98:1009–1024, 2008; Growth Motivation Index (GMI)—Bauer et al. in J Happiness Stud 16:185–210, 2015; Universal Values—Schwartz et al. in J Personal Soc Psychol 103:663–668, 2012). As predicted, QES was strongly related to compassionate goal motives, experiential and reflection GMI subscales, and weakly and negatively related to self-image goals. QES was most strongly and consistently correlated with values of universalism, benevolence, and self-direction that reflecting a balance of self- and other-concern. QES was positively (but somewhat inconsistently) correlated with stimulation, achievement, power, security, and tradition, and with hedonism, albeit weakly. QES was unrelated to conformity. A regression analysis found growth and balance motives significantly accounted for much of the shared variance between QES and well-being. Our results underscore the centrality of growth and balance values to the quiet ego construct.

**Keywords** Quiet ego · Values · Growth motivation, ecosystem and ecosystem goals · Well-being

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## 1 Introduction

The quiet ego refers to a manner of constructing a self-identity that transcends egotism (Wayment et al. 2015; Bauer and Wayment 2008). The quiet ego does not mean a squashed, deflated, or silenced ego. Nor does a quiet ego involve a disregard for one's immediate self-interest. Instead, the transcendence of egotism involves the balancing of self-interest with concerns for others as well as considering one's immediate situation with a longer-term view of one's own (and others') development over time. In other words, the path to a quiet ego is paved with balance and growth—the balancing concerns of the self and others and the growth of the self and others over time. When the quiet-ego construct was first introduced (Bauer and Wayment 2008), it was as a conceptual thread to connect various personality characteristics and situational mindsets—that converged on the idea of transcending self-interest. In subsequent research, a measure of quiet ego was developed that reflected four characteristics presumed to reflect a person's readiness to think, feel, and behave in ways that reflected balance and growth goals and values (Wayment et al. 2015). However, that research did not evaluate goals and values directly, but only as they were reflected and implied in measures of related constructs. The present research was designed to empirically examine this theoretical assumption. As research on the concept of quiet ego grows (e.g., Kesebir 2014), it is critical to map out the territory of values and motives that correspond to a quiet ego. In the present study we examine how these two broad features of a quiet ego—balance and growth—are reflected in value orientations and motivations.

### 1.1 The Quiet Ego

The quiet ego involves four primary characteristics that also reflect its concerns or pre-occupations—that is, qualities of self that the quiet ego strives to facilitate. The four characteristics are perspective-taking, inclusive identity, detached awareness, and growth-mindedness. In tandem, perspective-taking and inclusive identity facilitate the quiet-ego feature of psychosocial balance, particularly as they increase the likelihood of cooperation and dampen self-protective motives against others (Montoya and Pittinsky 2011). These two characteristics also represent growth—the psychosocial development of coming to understand and identify with an increasingly wider scope of people in one's psychosocial ecology (Erikson 1968).

Detached awareness and growth-mindedness involve characteristics of self-relevant attention in the present moment and over time, respectively. Detached awareness is like mindfulness (Brown and Ryan 2003; Siegel 2007), with differences too subtle for the present study (briefly, detached awareness is not just about mindfulness of one's immediate reactions to the situation at hand). Growth-mindedness views any given situation not solely in terms of the immediate moment but rather in terms of how that situation might serve as an opportunity for personal growth—and not just for the self but for others as well. Growth-mindedness is a concern for personally meaningful development, which may involve the self, others, or relationships.

The quiet ego can be studied as a personality characteristic, as a state of mind that can be prompted by the situation, and as a level of self-development (e.g., ego development—Loevinger 1976; these various ways of studying a quiet ego are represented across chapters in Wayment and Bauer 2008). As a characteristic of personality, the quiet ego can be studied within a personological framework of broad personality traits (such as the Big Five), characteristic adaptations (such as values and motivations), and life stories

(McAdams 1995, 2013). The Quiet Ego Scale (QES) has been shown to correlate significantly with the Big Five traits of emotional stability, extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness, plus a sixth trait in the HEXACO model (Ashton and Lee 2009), honesty/humility (Wayment et al. 2015; see also Exline 2008; Kesebir 2014). As for characteristics adaptations, QES has been shown to correlate significantly with generativity (McAdams and de St. Aubin 1992), self-compassion (Neff 2003), the presence of meaning in life (Steger et al. 2006), resilience (Bartone 2007), and various measures of well-being. Values are the motivational bases of attitudes and behavior (Bardi and Schwartz 2003; Schwartz et al. 2012; Smith and Schwartz 1997). Although the quiet ego has been shown to be associated with a variety of psychosocial variables that reflect a person's readiness to think, feel, and behave in ways that reflect balance and growth values (Wayment et al. 2015), this question has not yet been empirically examined.

We now describe three lines of research that assess growth and balance values we would expect to be related to the QES.

## 1.2 Motives and Values for Self-Other Balance and Growth

Over the past decade, Crocker and colleagues have outlined a motivational framework that describes both self-focused and other-focused values that impact personal relationships (Canevello and Crocker 2015; Crocker and Canevello 2008). Individuals with an activated egosystem motivation view life through a competitive lens, in which they evaluate and judge themselves and others. Conversely, an ecosystem motivation is characterized by the view that the self is part of a larger whole and is a perspective that equally values the well-being of self and others. Two specific types of goals reflect these two motivational frameworks: self-image and compassionate goals. Self-image goals are concerned with constructing and maintaining desirable self-images. Compassionate goals are those that are realized through collaboration with others and include the desire to support and assist close others. Retrospective correlational studies reveal that college students pursue self-image goals to a great degree (i.e., narcissism epidemic). In contrast to self-image goal motives, compassionate goals are more collaborative and less judgmental—an example of what we mean by “balance,” placing values on the well-being of self *and* others.

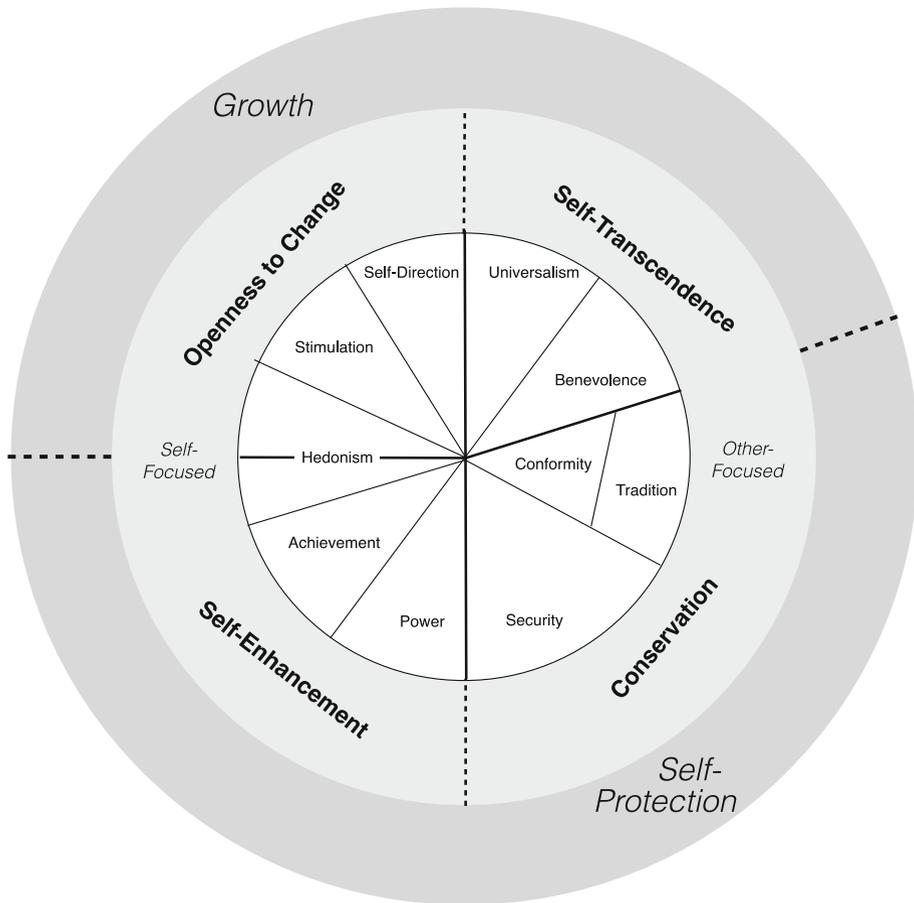
Growth motivation is the motivational component of growth-mindedness, a broader construct and an important feature of the quiet ego. More than having the belief that one can change, growth motivation is a desire to actually foster personal growth (Bauer et al. 2015). The “personal growth” in question here is not a matter of mere self-improvement (Sedikides and Hepper 2009). Self-improvement motives tend to be value-neutral, including motives toward material acquisition and social status (Sedikides and Strube 1997). In contrast, growth motivation is specifically eudaimonic, humanistic, and organismic in value orientation and can be characterized as experiential and reflective (Bauer et al. 2015). Experiential growth motivation is a desire for cultivating skills for personally meaningful activities and relationships and correlates with general measures of well-being, even when controlling for Big-Five traits and other forms of growth orientation. Reflective growth motivation is a desire for cultivating one's capacity for thinking in complex and integrative ways, much like an intellectual-learning motive. Reflective growth motivation correlates with measures of psychosocial maturity like identity exploration and perspective-taking (e.g., Staudinger et al. 2005), controlling for Big-Five traits and other forms of growth orientation. As a single scale, GMI is associated with taking responsibility for failure, notably for those low in self-esteem (Park et al. 2009), and with lower self-handicapping (Brown et al. 2012).

When we say the quiet ego reflects balance, we mean that it should reflect values that are concerned with the well-being of the self and the well-being of others. Schwartz et al. (2012) model of values postulates dynamic relations among ten universal values, that reflect, to varying degrees, values that relate to the self or to others: *Self-Direction* (control and mastery values), *Stimulation* (variety, stimulation and activation values), *Hedonism* (pleasure values), *Achievement* (success and ambition values), *Power* (social status and authority values), *Security* (safety, harmony and stability values), *Conformity* (self-restraint and obedience values), *Tradition* (respect, commitment, and acceptance values) *Benevolence* (helpfulness and loyalty values), and *Universalism* (values that reflect the importance of understanding, appreciating, and protecting the welfare of all people and nature). As seen in Fig. 1, the circular model contains nine wedge-shaped pieces, each representing a value (*conformity* and *tradition* share a single wedge of the circle because they share a broad motivational goal). Values that are in conflict with one another (e.g., *benevolence* and *power*) are on opposite sides of the circle whereas adjacent values are said to be compatible (e.g., *conformity* and *security*) (see Schwartz 2012 for a fuller description of the motivational combinations). Furthermore, as indicated in Fig. 1, the 10 values have been shown to reliably form four first-order clusters: openness to change (values of stimulation and self-direction), self-transcendence (values of universalism and benevolence), conservation (conformity, tradition, and security), and self-enhancement (values of power and achievement—cf. Fontaine et al. 2008; Ralston et al. 2011; Perrinjaquet et al. 2007). The first-order clusters combine to form two second-order clusters: growth (first-order clusters of openness to change and self-transcendence) and self-protection (second-order clusters of self-enhancement and conservation)<sup>1</sup> as well as a second set (self-focused and other-focused).

### 1.3 Study Goals and Hypotheses

As no study has yet empirically examined the relationship between a measure of quiet ego (QES) and a person's readiness to think, feel, and behave in ways that reflect balance and growth goals and values, we ventured several predictions. Given that compassionate interpersonal goals are associated with valuing the well-being of self and the well-being of others, we expected that QES would correlate significantly with compassionate goal motives and would be unrelated, or negatively associated, with self-image goal motives.

<sup>1</sup> According to Schwartz et al. (2012), and most recently, Ralston et al. (2011), the first-order value clusters can be further combined into two sets of second-order clusters. The first set are called "self-focused" and "other-focused" values. Self-focused values include power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, and self-direction, and these values primarily regulate how an individual expresses personal interests and characteristics. Other-focused values include benevolence, universalism, tradition, conformity, and security, and these values primarily regulate how individuals relate socially to others. As with our other hypotheses regarding the QES representing a balanced approach to self- and other concern, we expected that QES would correlate positively with both self- and other-focused values. The second set of second-order values are called "growth" and "self-protective" values. Growth values (hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, and benevolence) reflect motivations related to eudaimonic growth (Bauer 2008). Given that quiet ego is theorized to reflect growth-mindedness, we expected that the QES should be related to growth values. Self-protective values include conformity, tradition, security, and power and help individuals cope with "uncertainty in the social and physical world" (Schwartz 2012, p. 14). Again, given that QES reflects both self- and other concern, we expected a modest relationship between QES and self-protective values. *Achievement* is believed to share elements of self-protection and growth and is not included in either second-order value cluster. Thus, we expected QES to be most positively related to self-focused values, and to a lesser extent, self-protection values (both values reflecting self-concern), with other-focused values (concern for others), and with growth.



**Fig. 1** Theoretical model among Schwartz's motivational values (from Schwartz 2012)

We also predicted that QES would correlate with both reflective and experiential growth motivation. We have defined balance as concern for the self and others, and therefore expected that QES would be strongly related to the first-order clusters of openness to change (*self-direction, stimulation*) and self-transcendence (values of universalism and benevolence). We also expected that QES would correspond to a balance between self-focused and other-focused values. As noted earlier, a quiet ego does not lead a person to *ignore* the needs of the individual, even when those needs involve power over others. Therefore we expected that QES would correspond to both other-focused and self-focused values, if perhaps favoring the other-focused values. The reason for the favoring of other-focused values is *developmental*. At increasingly higher levels of psychosocial maturity and ego development, the ego quiets, and the person not only comes to view the self as interdependent with others but also comes to *identify less* with values that feature a self-versus-other mentality (Bauer 2008). While we have not included developmental measures in this study, we can expect that people who score high on quiet-ego characteristics are also likely *not* to endorse *some* of the items of the self-focused values, such as power over others and social status.

Earlier studies have found that QES is positively associated with indicators of well-being, such as life satisfaction, including several psychosocial skills and abilities associated with, and believed to promote, well-being (Wayment et al. 2015). Given that the QES is conceptualized as a characteristic of the self along McAdams's (1995) level of characteristic adaptations—not as ostensible and abstract as a Big-Five personality trait but not as subjectively rich and contextualized as a narrative self-identity—we expected that growth and balance values may at least partially explain why QES is positively related to well-being. The potential significance of our study is to provide support for the QES as reflecting growth and balance values as well as demonstrating the importance of these values for well-being.

## 2 Method

### 2.1 Participants and Procedure

Participants were 1117 first year college students with an average age between 18 and 19 (mean = 18.77, SD = 1.0). Due to an oversight in data collection there is no information about gender, ethnic status, although the sample from which it was drawn (introductory psychology students) is typically about 80% female and 75% white. Consent forms and questionnaires were completed on line via the SONA and Survey Monkey systems during the Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 semesters. The data set was randomly divided into five smaller data sets. All analyses were repeated across the five data sets.

### 2.2 Measures

#### 2.2.1 *Quiet ego*

The Quiet Ego Scale (QES; Wayment et al. 2015) measures a compassionate self-identity, conceptualized as the theoretical intersection of four well-known psychological characteristics: detached awareness, inclusive identity, perspective taking, and growth. Fourteen items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Higher scores indicate greater quiet ego characteristics. Coefficient alphas across the five data sets were .77, .74, .73, .76, .71 (alpha for total sample = .75).

#### 2.2.2 *Self-Image and Compassionate Goal Motivations*

Self-image and compassionate goals were measured (Crocker and Canevello 2008) by asking participants, "In the past week...how much did you want or try to..." followed by 13 items that list individual goals, such as "have compassion for others' mistakes and weaknesses" and "convince others that you are right." Each item was rated on a 6-point scale (1 = almost never; 6 = almost always). Higher scores on each subscale indicate greater use of the interpersonal goals. Goals are then grouped into two overarching sets of motivations, one for self-image and another for compassion. Coefficient alphas for self-image goal motivation were .73, .68, .73, .70, .73 (alpha for total sample = .72). Coefficient alphas for compassionate goal motivation were .84, .76, .79, .81, .79 (alpha for total sample = .80).

### 2.2.3 Growth Motivation

This eight-item scale Growth Motivation Index (GMI) measures growth motivation, and can be also examined in terms of two subscales: *experiential* and *reflective* growth motivation (slightly revised from Bauer et al. 2015). Experiential growth motivation represents the social-emotional/action-oriented growth motivation. Reflective growth motivation represents the social-cognitive/intellectual growth motivation. We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on the 8 GMI items, with four items loading onto each of its respective latent factors (GMI-experiential, GMI-reflective). The two latent variables were allowed to correlate. The model met expectations for adequate fit,  $X^2(14) = 23.37$ ,  $p < .05$ , CFI = 1.0, NNFI = .99, SRMR = .02, RMSEA = .03, 90% CI [.00, .04]. Coefficient alphas across the five data sets were as follows: GMI-experiential: .77, .75, .80, .74, and .78; GMI-reflective: .84, .85, .82, .84, .79; total scale: .81, .83, .80, .79, .79. Coefficient alphas for the total sample were as follows: experiential (.77), reflective (.83) and total score (.81).

### 2.2.4 Values

A values survey was adapted from (Lindeman and Verkasalo 2005) and included 10 items that ask about 10 primary values (e.g., Achievement, Power, Benevolence). Each value was described using multiple adjectives (essentially condensing a questionnaire that would normally have dozens of items into a 10-item measure). Each value was rated in terms of its importance on an 8-point scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 8 (of supreme importance). The middle score, 4, was rated as important. Participants could also select “opposed” to my values (rate as 0). Three individuals rated a single value in this manner. In order to interpret how correlations between the QES and individual values might reflect Schwartz’s and colleagues higher order value clusters, we created four first-order value clusters according to Schwartz’s descriptions: *self-enhancement values* (power and achievement, correlations ranged from .30 to .41,  $ps < .001$ ), *self-transcendence values* (benevolence and universalism, correlations ranged from .64 to .70,  $ps < .001$ ), *openness to change values* (self-direction and stimulation, correlations ranged from .49 to .66,  $ps < .001$ ), and *conservation values* (security, conformity, tradition, correlations ranged from .60 to .65). This first-order structure, clearly documented in studies using the 47-item SVS scale (Ralston et al. 2011), was also confirmed by a confirmatory factor analysis in our sample.<sup>2</sup> We also created four second-order factors. *Self-focused values* (power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction) had coefficient alphas that ranged from .68 to .80 (average = .77); *other-focused values* (universalism, benevolence, tradition,

<sup>2</sup> We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on the 10 value items, with the values loading onto their respective latent factors: self-enhancement (SE), self-transcendence (ST), openness to change (OC), conservation (C). The four latent variables were allowed to correlate. Model fit was improved by adding correlated error terms. We incrementally added these error terms to the model and observed improvement in model fit and compared factor loadings and correlations among the latent factors. A final model that added 10 pairs of correlated error terms fit extremely well,  $X^2(11) = 15.81$ ,  $p = 25$ , CFI = 1.0, NNFI = 1.0, SRMR = .02, RMSEA = .02, 90% CI [.00, .04]. The final factor loadings and between factor correlations were all significant ( $p < .001$ ) and extremely similar to those found in the initial model. The factor loadings were as follows: Self-Enhancement (power = .40, achievement = .92), Self-Transcendence (benevolence = .66, universalism = .83), Openness to Change (self-direction = .91, stimulation = .76), and Conservation (security = .47, conformity = .40, tradition = .74). The first-order value clusters were also intercorrelated (range .44 to .73), similar to results investigating the factor structure of the SVS (Perrinjaquet et al. 2007; Schwartz and Boehnke 2004).

conformity security) had coefficient alphas that ranged from .69 to .74 (average = .72); *self-protection values* (power, tradition, conformity, security) had coefficient alphas that ranged from .64 to .72 (average = .66); *growth values* (hedonism, stimulation, universalism, autonomy, benevolence) had coefficient alphas that ranged from .79 to .85 (alpha for total sample = .81).

### 2.2.5 Well-Being

The Brief Students' Life-Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS) was used to assess well-being (Huebner 1991). Students rated their family life, friendships, school experience, living situation, self, and overall well-being. Items were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = terrible; 7 = delighted). Coefficient alphas for well-being were .79, .75, .82, .77, .79 (alpha for total sample = .78).

## 2.3 Analytic Strategy

In order to enhance the confidence in our findings (e.g., replication), prior to the analyses we split the sample into five subsamples to meet a minimum of 138 in each sample (G\*Power 3.1.9.2 to estimate bivariate correlations, with two tailed tests, effect size = .30, alpha error probability = .05, power estimate = .95). Given the number of participants available, we adopted a more conservative approach and divided the sample randomly into five groups, with sample sizes ranging from 213 to 231, increasing the power estimate to .99. This procedure also allowed us to better observe the expected variability among the correlation coefficients (Cumming 2014). For our regression analyses a sample size of 567 is needed to detect a regression coefficient of .15, with alpha error probability = .05, power estimate = .95). Testing our predictions in our sample of 1117 increased the power to .99 (to detect minimum coefficient size of .127; see also Schönbrodt and Perugini 2013 regarding sample size and estimate stability). We report the correlations across the subsamples but also report the correlation coefficient for the total sample ( $N = 1117$ ), including 95% confidence intervals estimated by 1000 bootstrapped samples. Inspection of Table 2 shows that the 70% of the estimates derived from the five smaller subsamples largely fell within the confidence intervals obtained on the total sample. We examined Pearson correlation coefficients to examine the relationship between QES and our measures of values and motives. In order to examine our hypothesized model we used the PROCESS module (Model 4, Hayes 2013) with SPSS for Windows 21.0 (SPSS Science, Chicago, IL, USA). Mediation analyses were conducted using bootstrapping procedures and confidence intervals based on 1000 resamples (Preacher et al. 2007).

## 3 Results

### 3.1 Quiet Ego and Motives for Balance and Growth

We predicted that the QES should be positively associated with compassionate goal motives (ecosystem motivation) and, given the egocentric focus of self-image goals, would either be unrelated, or negatively associated, with self-image goal motives (egosystem motivation). Self-image and compassionate goals were positively correlated ( $r = .23$ ,  $p < .001$ ). We found that QES was strongly related to compassionate goal motives and

negatively related, albeit with low magnitude, to self-image goals. Also, QES was related to compassionate goals more often across studies than self-image values. In line with our expectations, QES correlated significantly with both the experiential and reflection subscales of the GMI (experiential:  $r = .45, p < .001$ ; reflection  $r = .39, p < .001$ ). The two GMI scales were correlated ( $r = .27, p < .001$ ). Taken together, the QES was associated with motives that reflect balanced concerns for self and other (Crocker's compassionate goals) and that reflect growth (Bauer et al., growth motivation). Correlations across the five sub-samples, as well as for the total sample, are presented in Table 1.

### 3.2 Quiet Ego and Values of Balance and Growth

QES was most strongly and consistently correlated with the values of *universalism*, *benevolence*, and *self-direction*, much as predicted. These values are reflected in the first-order value clusters of *self-transcendence* and *openness to change*, factors that have been verified in large samples with a multiple-item measure of values (cf. Ralston et al. 2011; see Table 1). Furthermore, these three values largely comprise the second-order value cluster of growth (see Fig. 1). QES was positively (but somewhat inconsistently) correlated with *stimulation*, *achievement*, *power*, *security*, and *tradition*. The latter four of those values are included in the first-order value clusters of *self-enhancement* and *conservation*, with which QES correlated either weakly or not at all. These first-order value clusters also comprise the second-order value cluster of self-protection values, with which QES correlated either weakly or not at all. QES also correlated with hedonism significantly but weakly so. QES was unrelated to *conformity*, which belongs to second-order value clusters of *other-focused* and *self-protection*.<sup>3</sup> As hinted earlier, QES correlated significantly with growth values, supporting the second major theme of the quiet ego. There was also a weak but significant correlation with self-protective values.

### 3.3 QES, Balance, Growth, and Well-Being

Our last study goal was to examine whether the growth and balance values and motives associated with QES could account for the relationship between QES and well-being. The correlations between well-being and values/goals are presented in Table 2. Well-being was positively, in some cases modestly, associated with all of the values and goals, and negatively related to self-image goals. The GMI experiential score had the highest correlation with well-being.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> According to Schwartz et al. (2012), universally, the values are typically ranked in this order: *benevolence*, *universalism*, *self-direction*, *security*, *conformity*, *hedonism*, *achievement*, *tradition*, *stimulation*, and *power*. Overall, our study respondents reported the values of achievement and security as most important, followed by self-direction, universalism, and benevolence. The lowest ranked value was nearly always power. We calculated the relative rank of our sample's values (across the five samples). The ranked order of values in our sample differed from universal preferences, most notably because achievement and security were typically ranked first and second in our sample (Spearman rank correlations ranged from .46 to .49).

<sup>4</sup> Here we wish to give a sense of the relative strength of relations between QES and its predicted correlates. The correlation between QES and *other-focused values* was significantly stronger than the one between QES and *self-focused values*,  $z = 4.67, p < .001$ . The correlation between QES and *other-focused values* was significantly stronger than the one between QES and *self-focused values*,  $z = 4.67, p < .001$ . Correlation between GMI and *growth values* was significantly stronger than between GMI and *self-protection values*,  $z = 7.07, p < .001$ . Correlations between GMI and *self-focused values* and *other-focused values* were statistically equivalent,  $z = -1.70, p = .11$ . Compassionate goals were more strongly correlated with *other-focused values* compared to *self-focused values*,  $z = 8.36, p < .001$ ; more strongly correlated with *growth*

**Table 1** Correlations between QES and values and motives by sub sample (S1 to S5) and total sample

N	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	Total Ss	95% CI <sup>a</sup>
	230	231	226	214	216	1117	
Egosystem and ecosystem motives (Crocker et al. 2010)							
Self-image goals	-.05	-.13	-.09	-.17	-.00	-.09*	[-.15, -.03]
Compassionate goals	.45	.51	.42	.52	.50	.48***	[.43, .52]
Goal ratio <sup>b</sup>	.42	.47	.40	.48	.33	.42***	[.36, .47]
Growth motivation (Bauer et al. 2015)							
Experiential	.48	.47	.45	.36	.48	.45***	[.40, .49]
Reflection	.45	.45	.30	.41	.34	.39***	[.33, .44]
Total score	.60	.54	.49	.50	.51	.53***	[.48, .57]
Values (Schwartz et al. 2012)							
Power	-.00	-.23	-.11	-.20	.07	-.12**	[-.19, -.05]
Achievement	.29	.13	.10	.18	.15	.18**	[.12, .25]
Hedonism	.19	.08	.01	.02	-.03	.06*	[.01, .13]
Stimulation	.33	.15	.14	.25	.08	.19***	[.13, .25]
Self-direction	.34	.25	.25	.24	.17	.25***	[.19, .31]
Universalism	.35	.30	.45	.30	.32	.37***	[.32, .43]
Benevolence	.35	.27	.45	.46	.24	.36***	[.29, .41]
Tradition	.08	.06	.20	.23	.06	.13**	[.07, .19]
Conformity	.05	.03	.01	-.00	-.10	.00	[-.06, .07]
Security	.23	.08	.19	.23	.15	.17**	[.12, .24]
1st order value clusters (Schwartz et al. 2012)							
Self-enhancement	.19	-.08	-.02	-.04	.04	.03	[-.04, .09]
Self-transcendence	.39	.32	.49	.50	.31	.40***	[.35, .46]
Openness to change	.37	.23	.22	.29	.16	.25***	[.19, .31]
Conservation	.15	.08	.16	.19	.03	.12**	[.06, .19]
2nd order value clusters (Schwartz et al. 2012): Set 1							
Self-focused	.31	.10	.09	.13	.08	.14***	[.08, .21]
Other-focused	.31	.20	.35	.39	.17	.28***	[.23, .34]
2nd order value clusters (Schwartz et al. 2012): Set 2							
Self-protection	.12	-.01	.10	.10	.00	.06*	[.00, .12]
Growth	.40	.28	.35	.38	.21	.33***	[.27, .38]

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> 95% CI estimated with bootstrapping (N = 1000) on total sample (N = 1117)

<sup>b</sup> The ratio of compassionate to self-image goal use. Higher values reflect a greater ratio of compassionate goals relative to self-image goals

In order to examine our hypothesis, we tested a two mediator model using the PROCESS module with SPSS 21.0 (Hayes 2013; model 4). Our goal was not to demonstrate longitudinal causality, but rather a meditational effect to support the theoretical position

Footnote 4 continued

values compared to *self-protection values*,  $z = 5.71$ ,  $p < .001$ . Self-image goals were more strongly correlated with *self-protection values* compared to *growth values*,  $z = 6.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and only modestly (but equally) associated with both *self-focused values* and *other-focused values*,  $z = .61$ ,  $p = .54$ .

**Table 2** Correlations between Second-order value clusters, GMI, goals motives, and well-being (N = 1117)

	Self-focused values	Other-focused values	Growth values	Self-protection values	Well-being
Compassionate goals	.17	.40	.36	.19	.12
Self-image goals	.18	.16	.08	.27	-.19
Goal ratio <sup>a</sup>	-.04	.17	.19	-.08	.26
GMI-experiential	.22	.27	.32	.13	.27
GMI-reflective	.18	.21	.27	.10	.12
GMI-total score	.25	.30	.36	.15	.22
Well-being	.14	.19	.15	.17	-

Due to sample size (N = 1117), all correlations were significant at  $p < .05$  or lower. Value clusters as theorized by Schwartz et al. (2012) using an abbreviated values scale

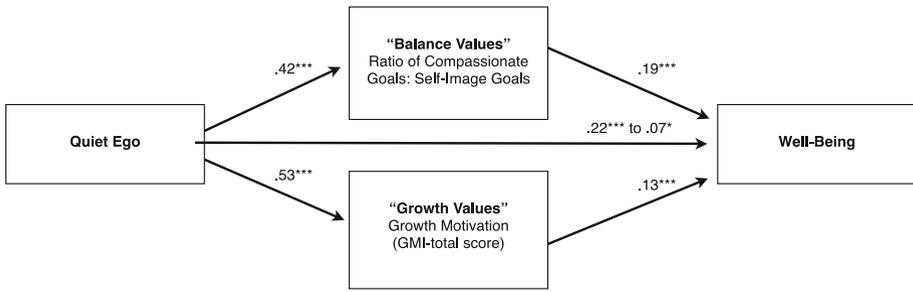
<sup>a</sup> Ratio of compassionate goal use relative to self-image goal use. Higher score indicates greater use of compassionate goals relative to self-image goals

that growth and balance values reflect a quiet ego in a meaningful way. Mediation analyses were conducted using bootstrapping procedures and confidence intervals based on 1000 resamples (Preacher et al. 2007) and evaluated using Sobel's test for estimating indirect effects (Preacher and Hayes 2004). The mediator "balance motives" was captured using the ratio of compassionate goals to self-image goals. The mediator "growth motives" was captured by using the total score of the GMI scale. These two measures used as mediators were correlated .27,  $p < .001$ . As depicted in Fig. 2, the direct effect of QES on well-being was initially significant ( $\beta = .22$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $t = 7.47$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI (.16, .28). With both mediators in the model, the path was reduced to .07,  $SE = .04$ ,  $t = 1.96$ ,  $p = .05$ , 95% CI  $-.00$ , .14]. As predicted, growth and balance motives significantly accounted for much of the shared variance between QES and well-being.<sup>5</sup> Taken together, these results suggest that "balance" and "growth" motives help explain the shared variance between QES and well-being.

## 4 Discussion

The quiet ego represents two overarching stances toward the self and others: balance and growth (Wayment et al. 2015). One of the benefits of our measure of quiet ego is that it ties together principles of psychological functioning that are found in the world's wisdom traditions and humanistic psychology. We sought to strengthen our empirical understanding of the quiet ego construct by examining the relationship between a measure of quiet ego with multiple measures of values and motives that reflect balance and growth motives in a very large sample of college students. Our hypotheses were supported. Our analyses with the values scale and GMI showed strong relations between the QES and growth values and motives. Our analyses with Crocker's concept of compassionate goals

<sup>5</sup> The indirect path from QES to well-being, via the ratio of compassionate to self-image goals was .08,  $SE = .01$ ,  $z = 5.69$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.05, .11]. The indirect path from QES to well-being, via the GMI was .07,  $SE = .02$ ,  $z = 3.71$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.03, .10].



**Fig. 2** Model results. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

and Schwartz's values also provided evidence that the QES is associated with values and motives toward a balance in concerns between the self and others. Our results lend further support for our original assertion that the QES represents a self-identity that transcends excessive self-focus by balancing self- and other-concerns while embracing the importance of personal growth. Thus, the results from this study add to our understanding of the quiet ego construct.

We also found that the relationship between quiet ego and well-being could be at least partially explained by balance and growth the values and motives. These results underscore the centrality of growth and balance values to the quiet ego construct. The benefits of putting the "self" in perspective has long been known to be a path toward a more fulfilling life, and a resurgence in ego-quieting research is evidence of renewed interest in this area (Kesebir 2014; Wayment et al. 2015). Whether obtained by immersing oneself in nature (e.g., "awe" Keltner and Haidt 2003), in skilled, creative activity ("flow" Csikszentmihalyi 2014), or in experiences that reduce excessive self-focus, putting the "self" in perspective can be beneficial. As the self develops in the direction of psychosocial maturity, the structural framework of one's understanding of the self and others expands to incorporate an increasingly wider range of the social ecology, from one's local groups (like family and neighborhood) to social institutions and organizations (like specific political and religious groups) to humanity (Bauer 2008; Erikson 1966; Loewinger 1976). In addition, the literature on self-affirmation describes how a focus on one's important values may help an individual reduce threat and defensiveness (Cohen and Sherman 2014). In these studies, individuals are asked to reflect on their most important values (from a list), and then write about their choice. Participants' open-ended descriptions and explanations of their important values vary considerably. Interestingly, participants' descriptions of the values most associated with positive self-affirmation effects are those that emphasize social connections and being part of purposes or projects that go "beyond" the self (Crocker et al. 2008; Shnabel et al. 2013). believe that such affirmations allow individuals to maintain a sense of adequacy in threatening circumstances, which then can buffer them against threat and reduce defensive responses to it (Burson et al. 2012; Correll et al. 2004; Creswell et al. 2005; Critcher and Dunning 2015; Sherman et al. 2009; Schimel et al. 2004). Wayment et al. (2015) recently examined the ability of a brief quiet ego intervention to reduce stress in first-year college students, a transition known to increase uncertainty and stress in college students (ACHA 2014; Regehr et al. 2013; Wayment and Taylor 1995). We tested a brief intervention designed to increase awareness of the four quiet ego characteristics. The audio-taped information was delivered three times in 30 days, about mid-way through students' first semester. The intervention was associated with longitudinal reductions in

oxidative stress and mind-wandering (Wayment et al. 2015). In another study of middle-age female artisans, this same brief intervention was associated with a dampened stress reactivity response to induced negative mood (Collier et al. 2016). Future research may benefit from testing the effectiveness of interventions (e.g., ACT, Mindfulness-Based, and other positive psychology interventions) that help individuals focus, cultivate, or strengthen growth and balance values.

Although not the main focus of our study, our results also supports Crocker's model of ego- and eco-system motivation. Compassionate interpersonal goals were not only correlated with the QES, but also with Schwartz's second-order value cluster *other-focused values* whereas self-image goals were most strongly correlated with the second-order value cluster of *self-protection values*. We also found that using compassionate goals relatively more often than self-image goals was related to well-being and partly explained the relationship between QES and well-being. Our results add to results reported by Crocker and colleagues on the benefits of compassionate goal use among college students. In several studies, compassionate goal use is related to reduced distress and improved social support and academic interest (Canevello and Crocker 2010, 2011; Crocker and Canevello 2008; Crocker et al. 2009; Crocker et al. 2010). In other words, quiet-ego concerns tend to hang together, just as noisy-ego concerns tend to hang together.

Our results also suggest that a quiet ego may be important for collective well-being. For example, in a recent set of studies spanning samples from 20 countries, *self-transcendence* and *openness to change* values (both reflect second-order *growth* value cluster) were positively related to political activism (Vecchione et al. 2015). In another study of culturally diverse participants, those who valued *self-enhancement* values (*power, hedonism, and—to a lesser degree—achievement*) worried more about threats to the self whereas those who valued *self-transcendent* values (*universalism and benevolence*) were less worried about threats to the self but more about the larger communities in which they lived (e.g., society, world) (Schwartz et al. 2000). Thus, cultivating a quiet ego and the accompanying values may be important for both individualistic and collectivistic well-being.

Our study was conducted with primarily white, female college students in the early years of their college education. Thus, our results are not likely representative of more diverse samples of adults. Our findings are further limited by a data collection error that precluded our ability to make gender or ethnic group comparisons, although our sample size was quite large. Future studies of the values associated with QES would benefit from examining if the values differed by gender, ethnicity, or age. On the positive side, we were able to examine the pattern of correlations between QES and values sequentially in essentially five samples of students by randomly dividing our large sample in advance of our data analyses. Inspection of the individual correlations provides a nice example of how much effect sizes can vary (e.g., “dance of the  $p$  values”) and the importance of reproducibility of results (Cumming 2014).

An important limitation concerns our measurement of Schwartz's ten values with only ten items. In the 47-item Schwartz Value Scale (SVS; Schwartz and Shalom 2009) each value is measured with multiple items (between 3 and 8 items), allowing for tests of factor structures of the 10 values, as well as the structure of higher-order values (Ralston et al. 2011). Thus, our use of a 10-item scale precluded us from the ability to confirm the factor structures of the second-order value clusters, and may have adversely affected the reliabilities of the higher-order value clusters. Although our large sample size helped to minimize this problem to some extent (McClelland 1997), future research would benefit from examining the relation of QES with the full 47-item SVS. In spite of these limitations,

however, our results examining the QES with three different types of goal/value measures suggests a pattern confirming our hypothesis that QES reflects growth and balance values.

Our results represent an important next step in better understanding the less defended and more compassionate self-identity that we have termed quiet ego (Bauer and Wayment 2008; Wayment et al. 2015). We hope our results encourage further research and application about the importance of cultivating balance and growth-related values. The literature on the benefits of an expanded sense of self continues to grow and interventions designed to assist individuals in this important developmental journey may have important implications for well-being.

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