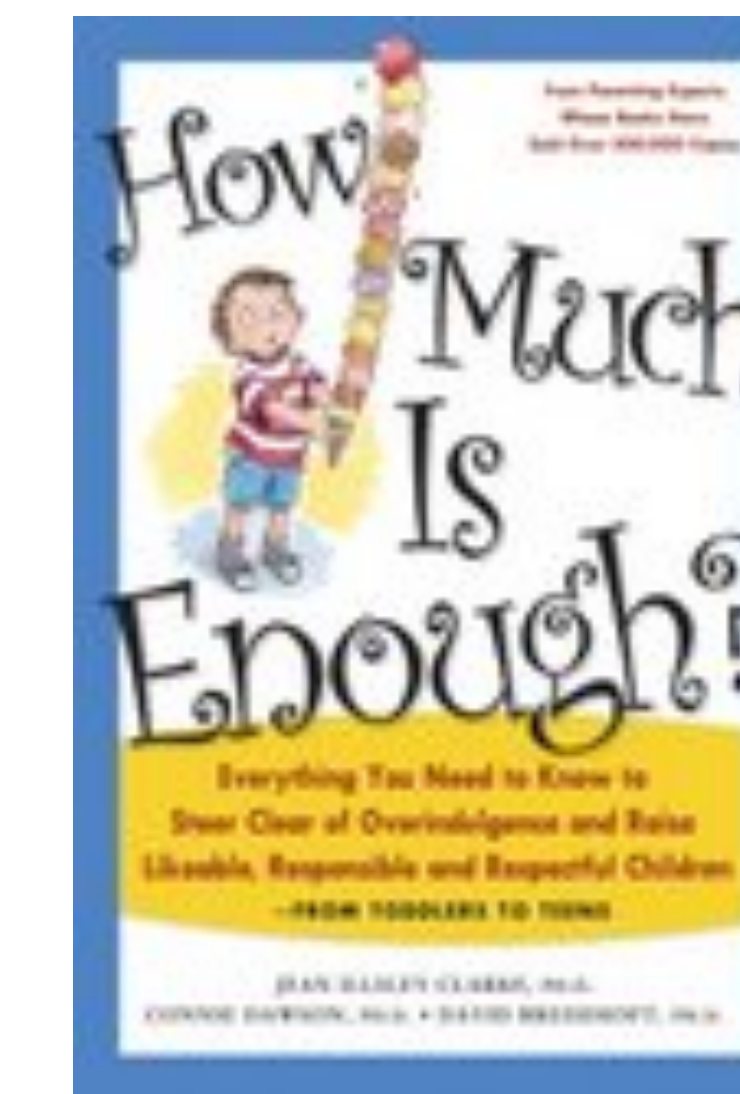




Relationships between Childhood Overindulgence and Adult Attitudes and Behavior

Mary Slinger and David J. Bredehoft

National Council on Family Relations Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, MN 11.5.10



Research Methods

Sample

The sample consisted of 466 participants (73% female, 27% male; ages 16-83; Mean age 30.72) from thirty-six states and the countries of Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Mexico. Participants accessed the study through the web at www.overindulgence.info (60.1% from psychology classes at Concordia University, and 39.9% from the webpage). Participants answered 128 questions consisting of demographic data and seven psychological scales.

Procedure

After participants read and agreed to the consent form they answered a questionnaire consisting of demographic data, and the following seven psychological scales:

Measures

Overindulged (Bredehoft, Clarke & Dawson, 2002; Bredehoft, 2007) is a 14-item instrument designed to measure parental overindulgence from the point of view of the child of any age (total overindulgence score and three subscores: *Too Much*, *Over-nurture* and *Soft structure*).

The Material Values Scale (Richins & Dawson, 1992) is a 15-item instrument designed to examine materialism as a component in consumer behavior through three domains: success, centrality and happiness.

Bredehoft – Slinger Delayed Gratification Scale (BSDGS), (Bredehoft & Slinger, 2009) is a 22-item instrument designed to measure a participant's ability to delay gratification (a total delayed gratification score and three subscale scores: impulsivity, task completion and anger/frustration).

The Gratitude Questionnaire (McCullough, Emmons & Tsang, 2002) is a 6-item instrument designed to measure the amount of gratitude and thankfulness of participants.

The Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirski & Lepper, 1999) is a 4-item instrument designed to measure subjective happiness and well-being on a global scale.

Self-Control Scale (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004) is a 36-item instrument designed to measure the power of restraint including topics such as eating habits, temptation, money, and concentration.

The Generalizability of Deferment of Gratification (Ray & Najman, 1986) is a 12-item instrument designed to measure postponement of gratification regarding financial planning and control one's emotions.

All inventories have established reliability and validity.

Hypotheses

The four tested hypotheses:

1. The **higher** childhood overindulgence (CO) the **more likely** to hold materialistic values in adulthood. The correlation coefficient between CO and total material values score is .28.
2. The **higher** childhood overindulgence the **more likely** to be unable to delay gratification. The correlation coefficient between CO and the BSDGS score is .41.
3. The **higher** childhood overindulgence the **less** grateful in adulthood. The correlation coefficient between CO and total gratitude score is -.13.
4. The **higher** childhood overindulgence the **lower** subjective happiness in adulthood. The correlation coefficient between CO and total global subjective happiness score is -.05; however, this relation is not significant.

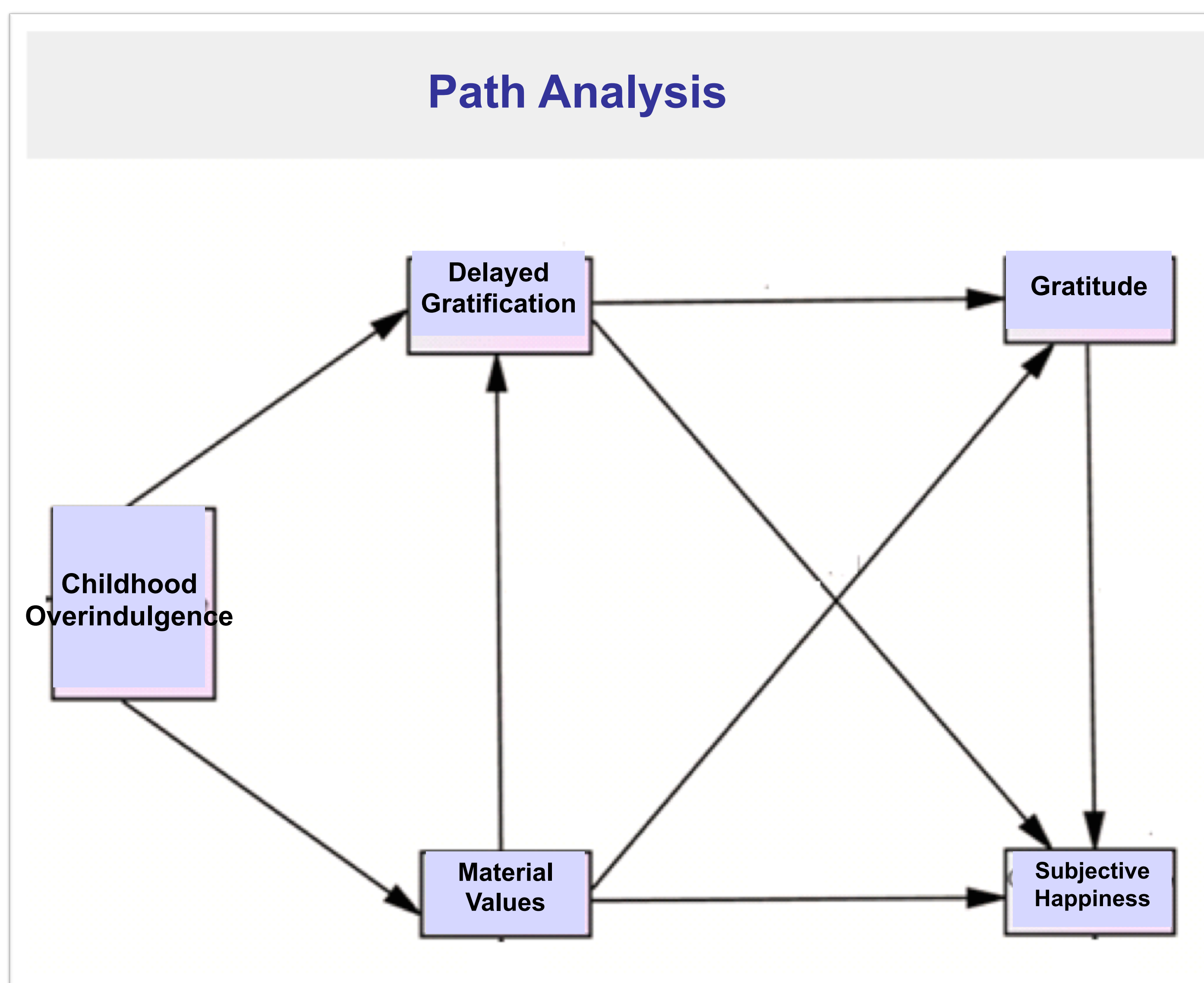
Discussion and Implications

1. Overindulged participants were more likely to hold materialistic values regarding success, centrality, and happiness. Two types of overindulgence, *Over-Nurture* and *Too Much* appear to be the biggest contributors to materialistic values with correlation coefficients of .26 and .29, respectively.

2. COs were not able to delay gratification (Bredehoft & Slinger, 2009) compared to those who were not overindulged as children. The type of overindulgence that contributes the most to an inability to delay gratification is *Too Much* with a correlation coefficient of .37.

3. Overindulged participants were more likely to be less grateful (for things, and to others). Conversely, those not overindulged were more likely to be grateful (for things, and to others). The type of overindulgence that appears to be the biggest contributor to becoming less grateful (for things, and to others) is *Soft Structure* with a correlation coefficient of -.16.

4. When you isolate a linear relationship between childhood overindulgence (CO) and global subjective happiness, it is not significant. However, path analysis shows us that the relationships are more complex. By looking at the combination and path of the variables we can conclude that CO leads to materialistic values and the inability to delay gratification, and ultimately to subjective unhappiness.



Explanation

Childhood Overindulgence (CO) leads to holding materialistic values in adulthood. The combination of both CO and materialistic values leads to an inability to delay gratification.

Subsequently, the inability to delay gratification leads to being ungrateful and unhappy. In addition to that, materialistic values contributes significantly to being ungrateful and unhappy.

Conversely, if an individual is **not** overindulged as a child, he/she is more likely to be able to delay gratification; and furthermore, the combination is in support of and promotes **both** gratefulness and happiness.

References

Bredehoft, D. J. (2007). *Reliability and validity findings for a measure of childhood overindulgence – Study 7*. Poster presented at the 2007 National Council on Family Relations Annual Conference, November 7, 2007, Hilton Hotel, Pittsburgh, PA. Published at <http://www.overindulgence.info/AboutOurResearch.htm>.

Bredehoft, D. J., Clarke, J. I., & Dawson, C. (2002). *OVERINDULGED*. Indicators of overindulgence scale. The scale is available from the lead author: C/O Concordia University – St. Paul, 275 Syndicate Street North, St. Paul, MN 55104; bredehoft@csp.edu.

Bredehoft, D. J., & Slinger, M. R. (2009). *Bredehoft – Slinger Delayed Gratification Scale (BSDGS)*. The scale is available from the lead author: C/O Concordia University – St. Paul, 275 Syndicate Street North, St. Paul, MN 55104; bredehoft@csp.edu.

Lyubomirski, S., & Lepper, H. S. (1999). A measure of subjective happiness: Preliminary reliability and construct validation. *Social Indicators Research*, 46, 137-155.

McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., & Tsang, J. (2002). The grateful disposition: A conceptual and empirical topography. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 112-127.

Ray, J. J., & Najman, J. M. (1986). The generalizability of deferment of gratification. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 126(1), 117-119.

Richins, M. L., & Dawson, S. D. (1992). A consumer values orientation for materialism and its measurement: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19(3), 303-316.

Tangney, J. P., Baumeister, R. F., & Boone, A. L. (2004). High self-control predicts good adjustment, less pathology, better grades, and interpersonal success. *Journal of Personality*, 72(2), 271-322.