

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILDHOOD
OVERINDULGENCE, MATERIALISTIC VALUES,
GRATITUDE, INSTANT GRATIFICATION, SELF-
CONTROL, AND SUBJECTIVE HAPPINESS IN
ADULTHOOD{
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY STUDY 8**

BY

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**The Relationship between Childhood Overindulgence, Materialistic Values,
Gratitude, Instant Gratification, Self-Control, and Subjective Happiness In**

Adulthood - Executive Summary: Study 8

Introduction

Overindulgence includes giving too much, over-nurturing, and too little structure (Clarke, Dawson, & Bredehoft, 2004). All three have been found to have negative effects on children lasting into adulthood (Bredehoft, Mennicke, Potter, & Clarke, 1998). For children, overindulgence can affect their materialistic values, subjective happiness, ability to delay gratification, overall self-control and gratitude. In adulthood, overindulged participants were more likely to hold materialistic values specifically in regards to success, centrality, and happiness. They were also unable to postpone or defer gratification in addition to their lack of self-control. Finally, overindulged children were more likely to be less grateful (for things, and to others) in their adulthood than those not overindulged while growing up. This study focuses on the relationship between childhood overindulgence and the five previously mentioned adult behaviors involved with: materialistic values, subjective happiness, postponing gratification, self-control and gratitude.

Sample

The sample consisted of 475 participants (73.1% female, 26.9% male; ages 16-83; Mean age 30.95; Median age 23.00) from 37 states, France, Canada, Australia, Germany, Iceland, Israel, England, Japan, and Mexico (see Appendix A). Participants were recruited and accessed the study through the web at www.overindulgence.info (60.1% from psychology classes at Concordia University – St. Paul, and 39.9% from visitors to the webpage). Students received bonus points for their participation in the study.

Procedure

After participants read and agreed to the consent form they answered a questionnaire consisting of demographic data, and seven psychological inventories: **Overindulged** (Bredehoft, Clarke, & Dawson, 2002; Bredehoft, 2007), **The Material Values Scale** (Richins & Dawson, 1992), **The Subjective Happiness Scale** (Lyubomirski & Lepper, 1999), **Bredehoft-Slinger Delay Gratification Scale (BSDGS)** (Bredehoft & Slinger, 2009), **Self-Control Scale** (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004), **The Gratitude Questionnaire** (McCullough, Emmons & Tsang, 2002), and **The Generalizability of Deferment of Gratification** (Ray & Najman, 1986). All inventories have established reliability and validity.

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). Respondents answer using a Likert scale of 1 (never or almost never)

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to 5 (always or almost always). **Overindulged** uses a weighted scoring system which produces an aggregate score and three subscale scores.

Total Overindulgence (aggregate score)

- **Too Much** (too many clothes, privileges, toys, activities, and entertainment);
- **Over-nurture** (doing things for the child, and over-loving); and
- **Soft structure** (no chores, too much freedom, allowed to dominate the family, not taught skills, no rules, rules were not enforced).

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.

The Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirski & Lepper, 1999) is a 4-item instrument designed to measure subjective happiness and well-being on a global scale. Participants rate each item by the degree to which each pertains to their level of happiness on a Likert scale from 1 to 4.

Bredehoft-Slinger Delay Gratification Scale (Bredehoft & Slinger, 2009) is a 22-item instrument designed to measure a participant's ability to delay instant gratification. This scale includes a total delayed gratification score in addition to three subscores: money, patience and work ethic.

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

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.

Results

Table 1
Correlations between Childhood Overindulgence
and Six Psychological Scales (N=466)

Scale Name	Total Overindulgence	Too Much	Over-Nurture	Soft Structure
Material Values Scale	.283**	.288**	.255**	.111*
Subjective Happiness	-.052	.056	-.030	-.135**
BSDGS Score	-.406**	-.374**	-.366**	-.197**
Self-Control Score	-.394**	-.249**	-.373**	-.293**
Gratitude Score	-.129**	-.047	-.071	-.160**
Deferred Gratification Score	-.328**	-.250**	-.317**	-.195**

*<.05; **<.01; ***<.001; ****<.0001

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and t-Test Comparisons between Young and Old on
Overindulgence and Life Aspirations Scores (N=369)

	Young (Ages 14-22) (N=186)		Old (Ages 23-81) (N=183)		t	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Total Overindulgence	114.13	21.52	97.74	27.19	-6.43	.0001
Too Much	52.77	10.72	41.40	12.53	-9.37	.0001
Over-Nurture	21.89	5.91	19.15	7.02	-4.06	.0001
Soft Structure	37.09	11.27	35.05	13.09	-1.60	.11
Extrinsic Aspirations	148.53	42.93	129.43	39.19	-4.45	.0001
Intrinsic Aspirations	252.51	26.57	255.60	34.23	.961	.02

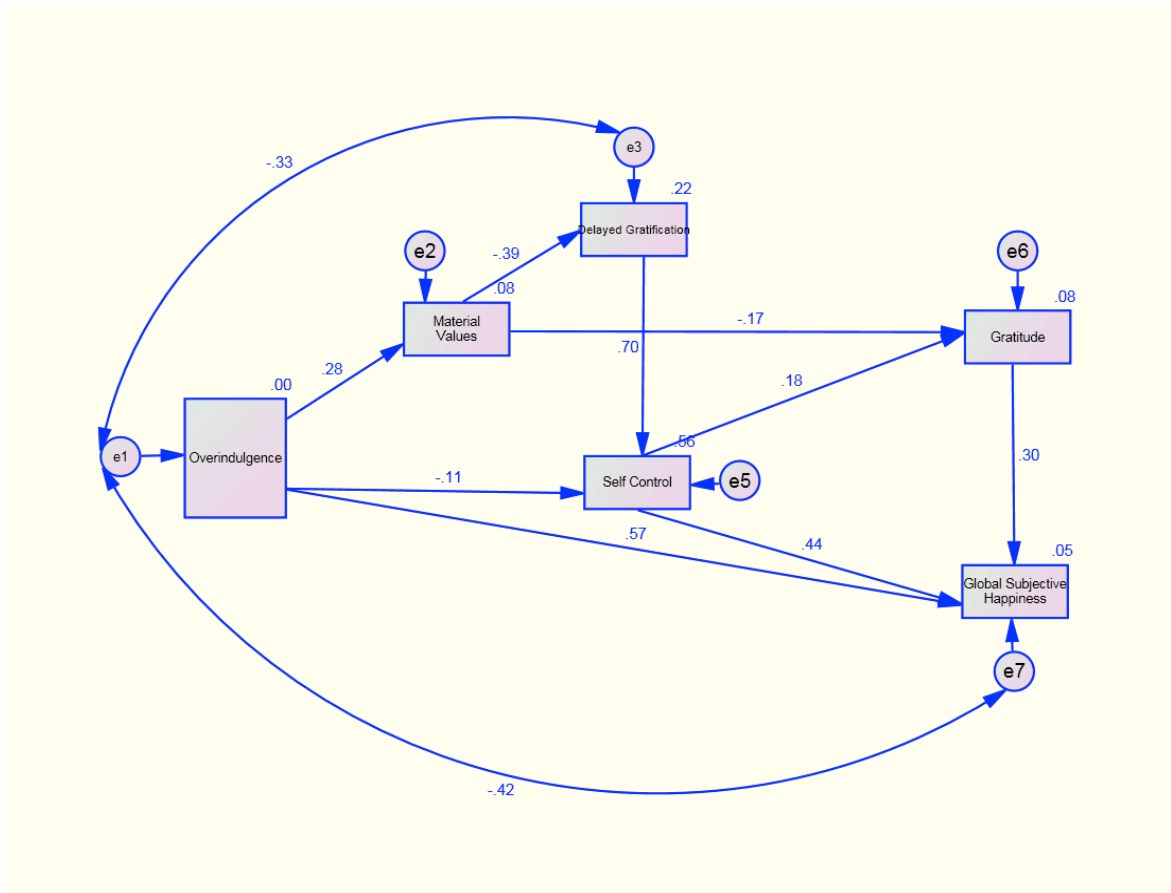
Table 3
ANOVA
Money Growing up by Overindulgence and Life Aspiration Scores

More & Whole Lot More Money (N=75)	About the Same Amount of Money (N=171)	Less & Whole Lot Less Money (N=123)
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	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	df		F	Sig.
							Between	Within		
Total Overindulgence	117.95	27.33	106.26	24.44	98.37	24.03	2	366	14.40	.0001
Too Much	53.59	12.81	48.26	12.07	41.63	12.08	2	366	23.62	.0001
Over-Nurture	22.83	6.73	20.49	6.47	19.19	6.44	2	366	7.284	.001
Soft Structure	38.83	13.87	35.25	11.31	35.54	12.27	2	366	2.420	.090
Extrinsic Aspirations (aggregate score)	146.99	48.75	134.83	36.68	139.91	44.46	2	364	2.222	.110
Intrinsic Aspirations (aggregate score)	258.92	26.89	249.42	32.98	257.60	28.63	2	362	3.736	.025

Figure 1
Path Analysis for Childhood Overindulgence Variables
Leading to Extrinsic Aspirations in Adulthood



CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	23	2.761	4	.599	.690
Saturated model	27	.000	0		
Independence model	12	759.745	15	.000	50.650

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.996	.986	1.002	1.006	1.000
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

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RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.000	.000	.059	.907
Independence model	.327	.307	.347	.000

AIC

Model	AIC	BCC	BIC	CAIC
Default model	48.761	49.464		
Saturated model	54.000	54.825		
Independence model	783.745	784.112		

HOELTER

Model	HOELTER	HOELTER
	.05	.01
Default model	1598	2236
Independence model	16	19

Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
TotalMaterialValuesScore	<--	TotalWeightedOverindulgence	.096	.015	6.371	***
BSDGSTotalScore	<--	TotalMaterialValuesScore	-.812	.082	-9.852	***
TotalSelfControl	<--	TotalWeightedOverindulgence	-.083	.025	-3.331	***
TotalSelfControl	<--	BSDGSTotalScore	.740	.035	20.843	***
TotalGratitudeScore	<--	TotalSelfControl	.056	.015	3.695	***
TotalGratitudeScore	<--	TotalMaterialValuesScore	-.115	.033	-3.477	***
TotalGlobalSubjectiveHappiness	<--	TotalSelfControl	.102	.013	7.588	***
TotalGlobalSubjectiveHappiness	<--	TotalGratitudeScore	.224	.031	7.282	***
TotalGlobalSubjectiveHappiness	<--	TotalWeightedOverindulgence	.099	.031	3.183	.001

Examination of the path values in the model shows that all of the paths are significant at $p < .05$. This suggests the presence of meaningful relationships between all the elements of

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the model. It is necessary to note that the strongest relationship is between the factors Too Much and Over Nurture ($b=1.057$, $C.R.=12.318$). The variance estimation below allows for more detailed understanding of the explanatory contribution of each factor to the model.

Squared Multiple Correlations: (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Estimate
TotalWeightedOverindulgence	.000
TotalMaterialValuesScore	.080
BSDGSTotalScore	.219
TotalSelfControl	.563
TotalGratitudeScore	.080
TotalGlobalSubjectiveHappiness	.054

The Squared Multiple Correlations are the percentage explained by each factor in the model. **Too Much** is the strongest predictor with 33% of the variance. One third of future problematic behavior (**Extrinsic Aspirations**) can be explained by this factor alone.

Limitations

Several limitations for this study exist.

- The sample is largely made up of women (females, 80.5%; males, 19.5%) and the results therefore should be cautiously applied to men.
- Participants were recruited through classes at Concordia University (56.9%) and the Overindulgence Project's webpage at www.overindulgence.info (30.1%). There may be a selection bias uniquely related to individuals who attend classes and visit this web page seeking information about overindulgence and then choose to participate in research related to overindulgence.

Discussion and Implications

- Parents need to be aware that overindulging encourages children to have **External Life Aspirations** of wealth, fame, and image (materialistic values) (see Table 1 and Figure 1)
- Specifically **Too Much** leads to **External Life Aspirations** (see Figure 1).
- Kasser (2002) "documents that people with **External Life Aspirations** (strong materialistic values and desires) report more symptoms of anxiety, are at greater risk

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for depression, and experience more frequent somatic irritations than those who are less materialistic” (p. x).

- Parents should be aware that overindulging (see Table 1 and Figure 4) encourages children **not** to become:
 - interested in the betterment of society;
 - willing to assist people in need;
 - willing to make the world a better place; and
 - willing to help people improve their lives except in order to get something in return.
- Are children today more overindulged than children in the past (see Table 2)? Yes.
 - Young (ages 14-22) in our sample were significantly more overindulged compared to old (ages 23-81).
- Do children who grow up in homes with a lot more money experience overindulgence more often (see Table 2)? Yes.
 - The amount of perceived family money growing up compared to other families makes a difference regarding overindulgence.
 - Those who grew up with more/a whole lot more money were overindulged the most (total, too much and over-nurture, but not soft structure).
- Is overindulgence the process parents use to instill materialistic values in their children (see Figure 1)? Yes.
 - Path analysis suggests that overindulging children leads to “**External**” rather than an “**Internal**” life goals.
 - **Too much** is the major culprit accounting for 33% of the variance. **Too much** leads to **Soft-structure**. **Soft structure** leads to **Over-nurture**.
 - The combination of all three types of overindulgence in childhood leads to “**External**” life goals in adulthood.

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Appendix A
State/Country of Participants

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
AL	3	.6	.6	.6
AR	1	.2	.2	.8
Australia	1	.2	.2	1.1
AZ	1	.2	.2	1.3
CA	12	2.5	2.5	3.8
Canada	7	1.5	1.5	5.3
CO	6	1.3	1.3	6.5
CT	3	.6	.6	7.2
England	1	.2	.2	7.4
FL	6	1.3	1.3	8.6
France	3	.6	.6	9.3
GA	3	.6	.6	9.9
Germany	1	.2	.2	10.1
HI	4	.8	.8	10.9
IA	3	.6	.6	11.6
Iceland	1	.2	.2	11.8
ID	1	.2	.2	12.0
ISRAEL	1	.2	.2	12.2
IL	6	1.3	1.3	13.5
IN	1	.2	.2	13.7
Japan	1	.2	.2	13.9
KS	2	.4	.4	14.3
LA	6	1.3	1.3	15.6
MA	1	.2	.2	15.8
ME	1	.2	.2	16.0
Mexico	1	.2	.2	16.2
MI	21	4.4	4.4	20.6
MN	289	60.8	60.8	81.5
MO	2	.4	.4	81.9
NC	3	.6	.6	82.5

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ND	3	.6	.6	83.2
NE	4	.8	.8	84.0
NM	1	.2	.2	84.2
NY	9	1.9	1.9	86.1
OH	10	2.1	2.1	88.2
OK	1	.2	.2	88.4
PA	9	1.9	1.9	90.3
SC	3	.6	.6	90.9
SD	1	.2	.2	91.2
TN	2	.4	.4	91.6
TX	4	.8	.8	92.4
US	3	.6	.6	93.1
USA	1	.2	.2	93.3
UT	1	.2	.2	93.5
VA	3	.6	.6	94.1
wa	1	.2	.2	94.3
WA	19	4.0	4.0	98.3
WI	8	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total	475	100.0	100.0	