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The Overindulgence Project

Press Release

New study finds overindulged children grow up to be greedy self-centered adults



St. Paul, MN, November 12, 2008: “Conventional wisdom says that children who have everything become materialistic and selfish, but now there is empirical evidence to support this” says Dr. David Bredehoft, Professor of Psychology and Family Studies at Concordia University, St. Paul, author of the study and coauthor of *How Much is Enough? Everything You Need to Know to Steer Clear of Overindulgence and Raise Likeable, Responsible, and Respectful Children* (Marlowe & Company).

369 adults from 37 states, Spain, France, Canada, Australia, Belgium, India, New Zealand, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom logged onto www.overindulgence.info and completed two questionnaires; one measured External Aspirations of wealth, fame, image and Internal Aspirations of meaningful relationships, personal growth, and giving to others. The second questionnaire measured childhood overindulgence.

The study found that overindulged children grew up to become “**Externals**” rather than “**Internals**”.

Externals want:

- to become rich and super wealthy;
- to become famous;
- to achieve a “unique look”; and
- to have people comment about how attractive they are.

Internals want:

- to grow and learn new things;
- to be able to look back on their life as meaningful and complete;
- to share life with someone and have a committed, intimate relationship;
- to work to make the world a better place; and
- to help people in need.

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The study also measured three types of childhood overindulgence:

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

The analysis shows that when parents overindulge children it leads to “**External**” rather than “**Internal**” life goals. Of the three types of overindulgence, **Too Much** was the major culprit. Younger participants (aged 14-22) were overindulged more than older ones (aged 23-81) as well as those that grew up in families with a lot of money.

“The bottom line is that if parents want their children to grow up to be greedy, self-centered, and never satisfied ---- overindulge them! On the other hand, if they want their children to grow up to be caring adults who are focused on meaningful relationships, and want to work to make the world a better place --- it is plain and simple – don’t overindulge them” says Dr. Bredehoff. “It’s not a surprise that some of our favorite TV shows are *American Idol* and *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*”

- Click link to email Dr. Bredehoff to request an interview Bredehoff@csp.edu.
- [Click here to read additional research on overindulgence.](#)