

MAGDALENA PORAJ-WEDER

The Maria Grzegorzewska University, Poland

Department of the Psychology of Development and Education

OVERABUNDANCE AND PRIVATION AS PREDICTORS OF MATERIALISM IN YOUNG ADULTS

The aim of the present study was to determine how the social and material status of the family of origin and the degree of satisfaction of material needs during childhood (excessive vs. insufficient) engender materialism in young adults. The participants in the study were 346 individuals aged 20 to 35. To measure materialism, the following scales were used: the Material Values Scale by Richins; the Priorities in Life Scale; and the Motives for Making Money Scale by Srivastav, Locke, and Bartol. Socioeconomic variables were measured with the author's own tool. The results indicate that the low socioeconomic status of the family of origin and the experience of privation in early life increase the attractiveness of material goods and money, and thus contribute to the formation of the materialistic orientation. The experience of overabundance during childhood, by contrast, is negatively correlated with materialism. This, however, does not mean that being spoiled has no negative consequences. It appears that people who were showered with material goods in childhood lose the ability to appreciate their abundance. They feel they do not have enough material goods, even if they have more than others.

Keywords: materialism; deprivation roots of materialism; excess; overabundance; privation; poverty.

INTRODUCTION

Parents use goods and money in everyday interactions with children – they buy food, clothes, and toys as well as provide various activities. Gifts are often treated as a way of showing love, but they are also a frequent form of influencing

Address for correspondence: MAGDALENA PORAJ-WEDER – The Maria Grzegorzewska University, Department of the Psychology of Development and Education, ul. Szczęśliwicka 40, 02-353 Warszawa, Poland; e-mail: mporaj@aps.edu.pl

the child – parents use material rewards and punishments to encourage desirable and suppress undesirable behavior (Richins & Chaplin, 2015). Sometimes they overdo it and either shower the child with goods excessively (Ipsos MORI & Nairn, 2011) or fail to satisfy the child's material needs at an optimal level, producing a sense of privation (Kasser, Ryan, Couchman, & Sheldon, 2003; Kasser, Ryan, Zax, & Sameroff, 1995). Both overabundance of goods and material deprivation at an early stage of the child's development may have negative and long-term consequences (Rindfleisch, Burroughs, & Denton, 1997). For example, goods and money can become ends in themselves, organizing human behavior (Richins & Chaplin, 2015). This kind of life orientation is referred to as materialistic (Belk, 1985; Kasser, 2002; Richins & Dawson, 1992). And although some researchers argue that a materialistic orientation has positive aspects and may benefit the individual (Rindfleisch & Burroughs, 2004), most studies suggest that it is generally harmful (cf. Belk, 1985; Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002; Kasser, 2002, 2010; Kasser et al., 2003; Richins & Dawson, 1992).

According to researchers, the materialistic orientation leads to various consequences affecting both the individual and his or her environment. They can be divided into three groups: personal costs, social costs, and ecological costs (Kasser, 2010). **Personal costs** are those that are borne by the individual and affect him or her directly. Apart from the lowered sense of well-being, they include a tendency to experience tension, anxiety, and depressive states; a tendency to abuse psychoactive substances (cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs – also used as a way of coping with anxiety and/or dissatisfaction with life); and psychosomatic disorders (Belk, 1985; Richins & Dawson, 1992; Kasser & Ryan, 1993). **Social costs** are borne by the community. They do not affect the individual directly, although they undoubtedly rebound on him or her. They are associated with the tendency, characteristic of materialists, to treat other people as objects that can be manipulated (Kasser, 2002). In pursuit of their own goals and needs, people with a materialistic outlook ignore other people's interests and needs. They focus largely on themselves – on their own desires and objectives (Górnik-Durose, 2002, 2007; McCracken, 1986). Finally, **ecological costs** are those that are borne by the natural environment. This thesis may seem controversial, but Kasser (2010) provides evidence to support it. It turns out that individuals with a materialistic orientation report a lower need to engage in activities aimed at environmental protection (Schwartz, 1996, as cited in Kasser, 2010) and less often take up nature-oriented activities (e.g., riding a bike or recycling; Brown & Kasser, 2005, as cited in Kasser, 2010; Richins & Dawson, 1992). They also manifest higher nonchalance about the use of natural resources. Since many par-

ents want to protect their children against this kind of life orientation, the factors that reinforce it are worth investigating.

In research on the origins of materialism in individuals, the role of privation and overabundance as its potential causes has been studied both in Poland (cf. Górnik-Durose & Dziedzic, 2013) and in other countries (Kasser et al., 1995; Kasser et al., 2003). However, researchers have focused mainly on *material deprivation* as the cause of the materialistic orientation (Kasser et al., 1995; Kasser et al., 2003). Studies of the opposite problem, the overabundance of material goods, are few and far between – even though the problem is socially important (as it affects many families) and linked to the materialistic orientation (Richins & Chaplin, 2015). The originality of the research presented here consists in the inclusion of this factor among the analyzed variables. Also included is the conceptual analysis and discussion of materialism and the materialistic orientation – the dependent variable in the present study.

In studies on the origins of materialism, one of two definitions is usually adopted. According to the definition proposed by Richins and Dawson (1992), materialism is a system of values in which special significance is attached to ownership of material goods. Kasser and Ryan (1993, 1995), by contrast, see it as orientation towards the pursuit of external goals. Each approach taken separately reduces materialism to one aspect only, offering an incomplete picture of this phenomenon (Poraj-Weder, 2015).

OVERABUNDANCE AND PRIVATION AS PREDICTORS OF MATERIALISM IN YOUNG ADULTS

Two paths leading to materialism are discussed in the literature: deprivation and socialization (Kasser et al., 2003). The former explanation makes materialism a compensation strategy, treating it as the result of failure to meet important psychological and material needs during childhood. The latter explanation assumes that the materialistic orientation is shaped in the process of socialization over a person's lifetime. Overabundance and privation as causes of the materialistic orientation may be considered in both of these contexts (Kasser et al., 2003; Richins & Chaplin, 2015). However, as already mentioned, researchers have focused mainly on *material deprivation* as the cause of the materialistic orientation (Kasser et al., 2003; Kasser et al., 1995). Growing up in a family with a low socioeconomic status, operationalized as the parents' low level of education and low income, is a factor favoring its formation (Chaplin, Hill, & John, 2014;

Kasser et al., 1995; Cohen & Cohen, 1996, as cited in Kasser et al., 2003). The conclusion that material deprivation leads to materialism is also confirmed by macroeconomic analyses (Abramson & Inglehart, 1995, as cited in Kasser et al., 2003; Inglehart, 1977), which show that the materialistic orientation is most prevalent in poor societies. The higher the affluence of a given society, the lower the measures of materialism (Abramson & Inglehart, 1995, as cited in Kasser et al., 2003; Inglehart, 1977).

Material deprivation in the immediate family environment has a negative impact on the development of the young person's character, but the same is true of excessive satisfaction of material needs (overabundance). Overabundance is especially harmful if material goods and money are substitutes for the time spent with the child by the parents, who do not supply enough of it for various reasons (Kasser et al., 1995; Moschis, Brodlieb, Kwai Fatt, & Pizzutti, 2013; Rindfleisch et al., 1997). Research shows that overabundance of goods in the child's environment fosters an entitlement mentality and a desire to possess more and more (Ipsos MORI & Nairn, 2011). In recent years, the notion of *material parenting* has been discussed in the literature (Richins & Chaplin, 2015). The term refers to the strategy adopted by parents who express their love through gifts of material goods and – importantly – who use goods (and money) to influence the child. They use various kinds of penalties and material rewards for this purpose, including gifts and large or small sums of money, which the child either receives or is denied if his or her behavior does not meet the parents' expectations. Interestingly, a study carried out by Richins and Chaplin (2015) showed that parents used this strategy – detrimental, because it fosters a materialistic orientation in adulthood – regardless of whether they manifested negative or positive parenting attitudes. It was commonly believed until recently that only negative parental attitudes – excessive control, rejection, and inconsistency – led to the formation of the materialistic orientation (Cohen & Cohen, 1996, as cited in Kasser et al., 2003; Flouri, 2004; Górnik-Durose & Dziedzic, 2013; Poraj-Weder, 2013; Kasser et al., 1995; Zawadzka & Dykalska-Bieck, 2013). In fact, as Richins and Chaplin (2015) have shown, parental practices adopted by a loving parent can also encourage the child to use material goods and money to “construct” his or her identity, engendering a materialistic orientation in adulthood (Richins & Chaplin, 2015). This finding shows the importance of the family context for the formation of the materialistic orientation, as well as the need for comprehensive diagnosis through the identification of factors that combine to create an environment fostering the predominance of materialistic values.

DEFINITION OF MATERIALISM

Several competing approaches and various conceptualizations of materialism are current in the literature. The three most widespread and frequently cited ones were proposed by Russell Belk (1985), by Marsha Richins and Scott Dawson (1992), and by Tim Kasser and Richard M. Ryan (1993, 1996).

Belk (1985) defines materialism in terms of the significance one attaches to one's possessions (p. 291) and operationalizes it as a personality trait expressed in a desire to exercise control over one's property (*possessiveness*), reluctance to share with others (*nongenerosity*), and envy towards those who have more goods or who have goods of higher quality (*envy*).¹ Richins and Dawson (1992) define materialism as a "value that guides people's choices and conduct in a variety of situations, including, but not limited to, consumption arenas" (p. 308). Materialism understood in this way is operationalized as a set of beliefs concerning the importance of material goods in one's life. It manifests itself in three areas. The first manifestation is a tendency to judge one's success and that of others by the quantity and quality of possessions; the second is the propensity to identify the possession of goods with happiness and satisfaction; and the third is the central place in life accorded to the acquisition of goods. Finally, the proponents of the third approach, Kasser and Ryan (1993, 1996), link materialism with a focus on the realization of *extrinsic* values, the most important of which are financial success (*money*), an attractive *image*, and *fame*.

It should be stressed that both Belk (in the original 1985 proposal) and Richins and Dawson (1992) emphasize the importance of possessions. However, the pursuit of money is no less important an aspect of materialism. This idea is present in the works of Kasser and Ryan (1993, 1996), who saw the core of materialism precisely in the *pursuit of financial success*. Many studies devoted to materialism are based on Richins and Dawson (1992) and thus ignore the "financial" aspect, which is missing in this approach. And yet, as Zygmunt Bauman (2003) argues, it is *acquisition*, rather than *possession*, that constitutes the essence of postmodern consumption – especially as the pleasure derived from an acquired and possessed object is illusory and short-lived, due to the peculiar ideal of material fulfilment, which can be a moving target, susceptible to social comparison and therefore difficult to attain (see also Górnik-Durose, 2002, 2007; McCracken, 1986). The essence of materialism, however, lies not so much in a focus on material goods and money, but rather in what this focus is based on –

¹ In the 1990s, this conceptualization was extended to include the tendency to accumulate goods (*preservation*) (Ger & Belk, 1996).

that is, in the individual's motivation. In other words, the essence of materialism lies in the needs the individual seeks to satisfy with money and goods (Górnik-Durose, 2007). These three aspects – attitude towards material goods, focus on money, and the accompanying motives – are included in the definition and operationalization of materialism adopted in this paper.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The main objective of the present study was to determine how the social and material status of the family of origin and the degree of satisfaction of material needs during childhood (excessive vs. insufficient) engender materialism in young adults. Based on the results of the research presented in the theoretical part of the paper, I formulated the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. Low socioeconomic status of the family of origin favors the formation of the materialistic orientation.

Hypothesis 2. The experience of material deprivation favors the formation of the materialistic orientation.

Hypothesis 3. The experience of excessive satisfaction of material needs favors the formation of the materialistic orientation.

Apart from hypotheses testing, exploratory analyses were also undertaken. Due to the fact that the family creates a very broad rearing and socializing context, while the socioeconomic status of the family and the pattern of the satisfaction of material needs are only two of the many aspects of this environment (Richins & Chaplin, 2015), I made an attempt to create a typology of families, based on differences in parenting profiles in terms of the personal and economic models transmitted. The question investigated was whether the different rearing and socializing profiles in the family of origin would lead to differences in the subjective experience of privation and overabundance. The prediction was that the lack or excess of material goods would be experienced differently, depending on the quality of the family environment. It is plausible that children in families with a materialistic profile rarely or never experience overabundance of material goods. This results in the materialistic person's feeling of never being satisfied in the desire to possess more and more (McCracken, 1986; Futrelle, 2006). Children who grow up in such families can experience a sense of deprivation, produced by the belief that even if they possess a great deal (for example, in comparison to other children), they could have still more ("there will always be a Bill Gates who has more stuff, and better" – Górnik-Durose, 2007, p. 8).

METHOD

Research tools and procedure

As already demonstrated, materialism in the modern world involves a relation not only to material goods, but also to money. These aspects were therefore studied in parallel. I used the following scales to measure materialism: the Material Values Scale, developed by Richins (2004); the Priorities in Life Scale, by Srivastava, Locke, and Bartol (2001); and the Motives for Making Money Scale, also by Srivastava, Locke, and Bartol (2001).

The first of the above tools, the Material Values Scale (MVS), can be used to measure those aspects of materialism that involve focus on material goods. Its original version consists of 15 items grouped into three scales, which measure the centrality of ownership in one's life and the role of possessions as a measure of success and a source of happiness. This three-factor structure – stable across studies carried out in countries with a developed culture of consumption – does not work in Central and Eastern European countries, including Poland (see Griffin, Babin, & Christensen, 2004; Poraj-Weder, 2013, 2015; Tobacyk et al., 2011; Wąsowicz-Kiryło, 2013). A consequence of the model's shortcomings is the relatively low reliability of the individual scales (cf. Górnik-Durose, 1993, 2002; Poraj-Weder, 2013). The two-factor model used in the present study is a good alternative solution. It enables the measurement of two aspects of materialism: (1) the tendency to evaluate one's own success and that of others in terms of the quantity and quality of possessions and (2) the tendency to treat the possession of goods as a source of happiness and satisfaction with life (Wąsowicz-Kiryło, 2013). Respondents are asked to mark their answers on a five-point scale, from 1 – *completely disagree* to 5 – *completely agree*. The tool consists of 9 items, and its reliability was satisfactory. Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient for the subscales was $\alpha = .704$ and $\alpha = .720$, respectively.

To measure the second component of materialism, namely, focus on money and the underlying motivation, I used the Priorities in Life Scale and the Motives for Making Money Scale, designed by Srivastava, Locke and Bartol (2001). The Priorities in Life Scale is my own Polish adaptation of the Money Importance Rating by Srivastava, Locke, and Bartol (2001). It measures the importance of financial success in comparison to other priorities in life (expressed as the ratio of the number of points given by the respondent to financial success to the number of points given to the remaining priorities). The reliability of the tool was assessed in independent studies, using the intra-class correlation coefficient in

a test-retest design (Poraj-Weder, 2015). The Motives for Making Money Scale measures the needs that can be satisfied by money. This tool was adapted into Polish by Poraj-Weder (2013, 2015). It consists of 10 scales, which are grouped into three main dimensions, corresponding to three types of motivation related to money management: hedonistic (driven by pleasure), negative (compensation), and positive (related to the perception of money as a means to an end). The tool consists of 30 items. Respondents mark their answers on a 10-point scale. In the present study, I used two of the three subscales to measure hedonistic motivation (the Hedonistic Motivation scale) and compensatory motivation (the Negative Motivation scale). Their reliability, measured as Cronbach's α coefficient, was $\alpha = .773$ and $\alpha = .800$, respectively.

I used two indicators to measure the social and material status of the family of origin: the parents' education (an objective indicator) and the respondent's assessment of the material status of the family of origin (a subjective indicator). While the use of the parents' education as an indicator of social status is uncontroversial (it is a measure commonly used in social science), one might question the choice of a subjective indicator – rather than an objective one, such as net income per person in the household – as a measure of material status. Previous studies, however, have shown that objective indicators of material status (income, property) do not always correlate with its subjective assessment (Maison, 2013; Maison & Sekścińska, 2014). “Wealth and poverty are states of mind. People can be financially rich and psychologically poor or vice versa” (Tang, Luna-Arocas, Sytarso, & Tang, 2004, as cited in Gąsiorowska, 2010). Since the subjective experience of wealth and poverty plays a key role in the present study, a subjective rather than an objective indicator was used.

In order to construct an indicator comprising both these aspects (the parents' education and the assessment of the financial situation of the family of origin), I used principal component analysis. This led to the definition of a single dimension, which explains 56.77% of the variance. I computed the respondents' scores along this dimension using the regression method (following the procedure presented in OECD, 2008).

The second explanatory variable was measured as the respondents' assessment of the degree to which their material needs were satisfied during childhood. The measurement was made on a 4-point scale, where 1 meant that parents *did not satisfy the respondent's material needs*, 2 meant that they *satisfied these needs to a limited extent*, 3 meant that they *satisfied them to a satisfactory extent*, and 4 meant that they *exceeded the respondent's expectations in this respect*.

The rearing and socializing profile of the families participating in the study was determined by means of four tools: the short version of the My Memories of Upbringing Questionnaire (s-EMBU) by Arrindell and collaborators (1999), adapted by Poraj-Weder (2013); a retrospective version of Schwartz's Portrait Values Questionnaire (2006); and a retrospective version of the Life Priorities of the Mother and Father Questionnaire as well as the Motives for Making Money Scale (mother and father) by Srivastava, Locke, and Bartol (2001).

The first of these tools, the My Memories of Upbringing Questionnaire (s-EMBU), is the present author's Polish translation of the Egna Minnen Beträffande Uppfostran questionnaire developed by Willem A. Arrindell and collaborators (1999). It consists of two parts; one of them concerns the mother's parental attitudes (23 items) and the other concerns the father's (23 items). Respondents marked their answers on a 4-point scale (1 – *No, never*; 2 – *Yes, but rarely*; 3 – *Yes, often*; 4 – *Yes, most often*). The questionnaire items make it possible to describe the parents' behavior in terms of three dimensions: *emotional warmth*, *rejection*, and *overprotection*. The first of these dimensions (*emotional warmth*) reflects the perception of one's parents as accepting and supporting the child. The second (*rejection*) reflects the perception of one's parents as critical, hostile, and prone to mete out punishment frequently. Finally, the *overprotection* dimension characterizes parents as intrusive and controlling, hindering the development of independence and autonomy in the child. In the present study, Cronbach's α coefficient ranged from .779 to .857 for the EMBU-Mother questionnaire and from .787 to .906 for the EMBU-Father questionnaire.

The retrospective version of the Portrait Values Questionnaire, PVQ-21, developed by Schwartz (2006) can be used to measure the values transmitted by the mother and father. It consists of the same set of questions as the classic version of the PVQ. However, while in the classic version the respondents answer the question *To what extent is this person (the one described in the questionnaire) like you?*, in the version used for the retrospective assessment of the mother's and father's values the question asked is different: *To what extent is this person like your mother/father?* The tool consists of 21 short, two-sentence descriptions of a person, focusing on the prioritized values. The respondent's task is to rate the similarity between the person described and his or her mother or father, using a 6-point scale (from *completely unlike me* to *very similar to me*). The tool consists of 10 subscales, corresponding to 10 types of values distinguished by Schwartz (1992). These 10 values can be divided into four groups: (1) Openness to Change, (2) Self-Transcendence, (3) Conservation, and (4) Self-Enhancement. The values classified into the first group are *stimulation* and *self-direction*; the

second group comprises *conformity*, *tradition*, and *security*; the third group is constituted by *universalism* and *benevolence*; and the fourth one comprises *achievement* and *power*. Between the values belonging to the Openness to Change and Self-Enhancement groups, there is the last, tenth value in the classification proposed by Schwartz (1992) – namely, *hedonism*. It has been shown that the materialistic orientation is related to the values constituting two of these groups: positively to *self-enhancement* values (power and achievement) and negatively to *self-transcendence* values (benevolence and universalism) (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002; Kilbourne, Grünhagen, & Foley, 2005). These are precisely the variables that I included in the analyses presented in this study. To assess the reliability of the tool, I used two parameters (interchangeably): Cronbach's α coefficient and Pearson's r correlation coefficient. Cronbach's α was used to measure the reliability of the *universalism* and *power-achievement* subscales, each consisting of three items. Pearson's r correlation coefficient was used to estimate the reliability of the two-item subscales – *benevolence* and *hedonism*. The values obtained were acceptable.

PARTICIPANTS

The research strategy adopted in the present study is based on adults' retrospective assessment of their experience during childhood and adolescence. I recruited 346 subjects – students of several universities, aged 20 to 35. The sample included 230 women (66.5%) and 116 men (33.5%).

RESULTS

First, I checked the normality of the distribution of the data collected in the study. Due to the fact that the distribution of most of the variables under study was asymmetric, I applied logarithmic transformation (Bedyńska & Książek, 2012; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).²

² The logarithm function was applied to almost all variables. The only exceptions were the respondent's negative motives, the mother's negative motives, and the father's negative motives (measured by means of the Motives for Making Money Scale – standard and retrospective versions), the father's emotional warmth (measured with s-EMBU), the mother's and father's hedonistic motives (measured with the retrospective version of the Motives for Making Money Scale), and the status of the family of origin (measured using a questionnaire constructed for the purpose of the study).

After this preliminary step, hypothesis testing was performed. In order to test Hypotheses 1-3, I constructed five stepwise regression models, one for each of the five aspects of materialism under study.³ In each model, there were three explanatory variables: the socioeconomic status of the family of origin (in Block 1) and two variables reflecting the degree to which material needs were satisfied during childhood (in Block 2). The first variable measured the subjective feeling of privation, while the second measured the subjective feeling of excessive satisfaction of material needs. I created these two variables by transforming the original variable (*the degree to which material needs were satisfied*) into two dichotomous variables. Level 1 of the first variable (*deprivation experience*) indicated the experience of deprivation in terms of the satisfaction of material needs during childhood, and level 0 indicated the absence of deprivation – that is, the belief that material needs were optimally satisfied. Level 1 of the second variable (*experience of overabundance*) indicated excessive indulgence in or being lavished with goods during childhood, while level 0 indicated optimal gratification. Of the five models under analysis, three proved significant. It is worth pointing out that the revealed relationships are relatively weak (ΔR^2 ranged from .010 to .031) but consistent with the hypotheses of the present study. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *The Socioeconomic Status of the Family of Origin and the Level of Satisfaction of Material Needs as Predictors of Materialism in Stepwise Regression Analysis*

Explained variable	Explanatory variables	β	t	p	ΔR^2
Possessions as a source of happiness	Socioeconomic status	-.148	-2.772	.006	.022
	Socioeconomic status	-.137	-2.607	.010	.031
	Perceived overabundance	-.176	-3.339	.001	
Focus on money	Socioeconomic status	-.112	-2.094	.037	.010
Compensation as motive for making money	Socioeconomic status	-.121	-2.264	.024	.015
	Socioeconomic status	-.108	-2.024	.044	.023
	Perceived deprivation	.153	2.874	.004	

Significance of model estimator: Possessions as a source of happiness [$F(2, 343) = 9.531, p < .01$]; Focus on money [$F(1, 344) = 4.386, p < .05$]; Compensation motives for making money [$F(2, 343) = 6.746, p < .01$].

³ These were Possessions as a Determinant of Success and Possessions as a Source of Happiness (measured using the Material Values Scale), Focus on Money (measured using the Life Priorities Scale), and Hedonistic Motives and Negative Motives (measured using the Motives for Making Money Scale).

As shown in the table above, low socioeconomic status of the family of origin is the key variable explaining the formation of various aspects of the materialistic orientation; the negative sign of the regression coefficient indicates the direction of the relationship. These results confirm the first hypothesis about the relationship between the materialistic orientation and parents' socioeconomic status. A detailed analysis shows that growing up in a family of low socioeconomic status leads to the belief that the possession of material goods brings happiness ($\beta = -.137, p = .010$) and that money is more important than other priorities in life ($\beta = -.112, p = .037$). Being raised in such a family can also lead to the emergence of negative motives for making money and of the conviction that money can compensate for personal deficiencies ($\beta = -.108, p = .044$).

The second hypothesis tested in the study concerned the relations between materialism and the experience of material deprivation. The analysis showed that the (subjective) experience of deprivation during childhood is conducive to the formation of compensation motives for making money ($\beta = -.153, p = .004$). I found no statistically significant relationships with other aspects of materialism. Thus, the second hypothesis was only partially confirmed.

The last hypothesis tested in the present study concerned the relations between materialism and the experience of overabundance. The negation of this hypothesis was confirmed: the subjective experience of overabundance was negatively correlated with materialism ($\beta = -.176, p = .001$), and this correlation was stronger than that between materialism and the socioeconomic status of the family of origin.

In the next step, hypothesis testing was supplemented with exploratory analysis. I constructed a typology of families, based on differences in parenting profiles with respect to personal and economic models transmitted by the parents. The question investigated was whether *the different rearing and socializing patterns in the family of origin would lead to differences in the subjective experience of deprivation and overabundance*.

In order to define subject groups, I performed a *k*-means cluster analysis (Marek, 1989). Unlike other classification algorithms, this method groups respondents in such a way that the greatest possible similarity between individuals in a given cluster is achieved (Marek, 1989). The following results obtained in the study were used for this analysis: the mother's and father's parenting attitudes, the values transmitted by the mother and father, the significance attached to money, and the parents' motives for making money.

The scores on different scales were standardized before the clustering algorithm was applied to them. I performed the analysis for two, three, and four clus-

ters. The optimal solution was obtained for three clusters of 203, 60, and 83 subjects. The groups differed significantly on most dimensions used in the analysis. The figure below shows family types corresponding to the clusters in a graphical form.

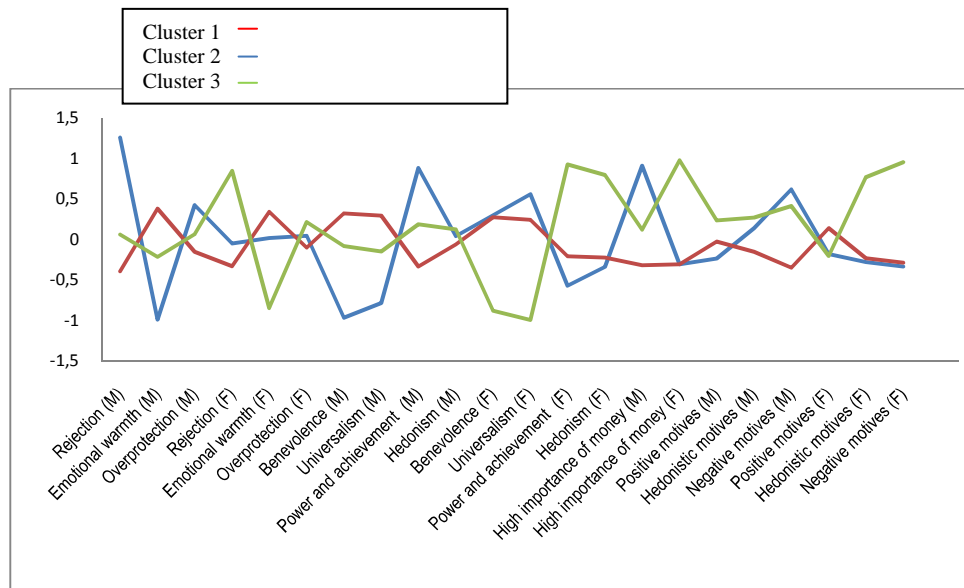


Figure 1. Patterns of socialization characteristic of mothers and fathers in a given cluster.

Cluster 1. A non-materialistic family with positive parenting patterns

The first cluster consisted of 203 subjects: 134 women and 69 men. These respondents shared a similar perception of their mothers and fathers and had average scores on all dimensions under analysis. The profile of mothers and fathers in the first cluster is rather monotonous and uniform over the mother-father dyad. Importantly, however, it is positive. This is demonstrated by the constellation of results on individual dimensions under analysis. Both mothers and fathers are perceived by the respondents as exhibiting a positive pattern of parenting behaviors. They are perceived as accepting, supporting, and caring. According to their children, they prioritize the values which previous studies have shown to be negatively correlated with materialism – benevolence and universalism (caring for other people's good is the core of these values) – and this is reflected in the attitude towards money attributed to the parents. In the respondents' opinion, both their mothers and fathers did not attach much importance to money but did

not belittle its role, either. They (especially fathers) treated money as a means to an end – namely, as a means to meeting their own basic needs and those of their families, rather than as a way of satisfying their own whims and compensating for their deficiencies. The low score on the whim satisfaction and compensation attitude perceived in the mothers makes the subjects in Cluster 1 the least materialistic group of the three clusters.

Cluster 2. A materialistic family with a rejecting mother

The second cluster, with only 60 respondents (which makes it the smallest cluster), includes 39 women and 21 men. The profile of the mother is very pronounced, negative and, interestingly, very consistent on all dimensions under analysis. Indeed, in their parenting behavior, the mothers are perceived as cold, rejecting, and showing a tendency to exercise excessive control. As far as values are concerned, they are seen as ambitious, success-oriented, and seeking prestige and power. Finally, in terms of the transmitted economic patterns, they are described as materialistic, focused on money, and likely to see it as a means of gaining advantage over others and compensating for one's shortcomings. On the other hand, the profile of the fathers is moderate and monotonous – “averaged” on all the dimensions under analysis, except values (clearly universalistic). It is not a negative profile, but a neutral one, especially as regards the economic models transmitted. The fathers were described as attaching little importance to money and having no clear preference as to motives for making money. They provide a contrasting background for the clearly materialistic, money-focused mothers.

Cluster 3. A materialistic family with a rejecting father

The third cluster included 57 women and 26 men (83 respondents in total). The profiles of the mothers and fathers in this cluster are closely related to those in the second cluster, but the roles are reversed: the father is materialistic and rejecting, while the mother's profile is less distinctive. However, the mother is by no means neutral. Despite the averaging, the mother's profile is clearly less positive than in the first cluster (as already mentioned). Thus, in comparison to the first, clearly positive cluster, mothers in this case are perceived as less supportive and more critical. They manifest a more strongly hedonistic approach to life, have a need to dominate and exercise power, and attach greater importance to symbols of status. They attach greater importance to money and want to use it to satisfy more of their needs (as shown by higher scores on all dimensions de-

scribing motives for making money – both terminal and instrumental). Together with the emotionally cold, rejecting, and materialistic father, they create a rearing and socializing environment promoting the transmission of materialistic patterns.

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CLUSTERS
IN THE SOCIAL AND MATERIAL STATUS OF THE FAMILY OF ORIGIN
AND IN THE DEGREE TO WHICH MATERIAL NEEDS ARE SATISFIED**

The groups defined through cluster analysis, which differ in their rearing and socializing patterns, were characterized in terms of the socioeconomic status of the family of origin and the level of satisfaction of material needs. I analyzed differences in three variables: the perceived socioeconomic status of the family of origin, perceived material deprivation, and perceived material overabundance. I used the Kruskal-Wallis rank test to describe differences in terms of the first variable and applied the chi-square test to determine the differences in the level of the other two variables, which are dichotomous. The results of the analyses are shown in Tables 2-4.

Table 2. *Differences Between the Clusters in Subjectively Perceived Socioeconomic Status*

	Cluster 1		Cluster 2		Cluster 3		K-W Test	
	M_1	SD_1	M_2	SD_2	M_3	SD_3	χ^2	p
Socioeconomic status of the family of origin	0.05	0.99	-0.09	0.72	-0.06	1.19	2.543	.280

Table 3. *Differences Between Clusters in Subjectively Perceived **Material Deprivation** During Childhood*

	Cluster 1		Cluster 2		Cluster 3	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Perceived material deprivation	15	7.4	16	26.7	18	21.7
Perceived lack of material deprivation	188	92.6	44	73.3	65	78.3

$\chi^2 = 19.244, p < .001$

Table 4. *Differences Between Clusters in Subjectively Perceived **Material Overabundance** During Childhood*

	Cluster 1		Cluster 2		Cluster 3	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Perceived material overabundance	43	21.2	11	18.3	7	8.4
Perceived lack of material overabundance	160	78.8	49	81.7	76	91.6

$\chi^2 = 6.618, p < .037$

The Kruskal-Wallis test did not reveal any statistically significant difference between the clusters (which differed significantly in terms of psychological variables) in the perceived socioeconomic status of the family of origin. They differ, however, in their perceived satisfaction (or lack of it) with the degree to which their material needs were met during their childhood, both in terms of subjectively perceived deprivation and in terms of subjectively perceived overabundance. The data in Table 3 show that the proportion of subjects claiming material deprivation is the highest in the second cluster (with a rejecting and materialistic mother) and the lowest in the first cluster (with parents perceived as supportive and non-materialistic). I found interesting and unexpected correlations involving the subjectively perceived overabundance of material goods. It turned out that the proportion of respondents claiming that they had experienced an overabundance of material goods was the highest in the third cluster (with a rejecting and materialistic father) and the lowest in the first cluster (with a positive parental profile). The scores of respondents in the third cluster deserve special attention. These subjects scored high on the subjective experience of deprivation and low on the subjective sense of overabundance. Presumably, these individuals exhibit an entitlement mentality and consider the possession of goods as the norm. They do not feel overindulged, because they feel they “deserve it” – hence their low scores on the sense of overabundance. Moreover, they are convinced that there were many goods they should have received but did not – hence their high scores on the sense of deprivation.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to determine the way in which the social and material status of the family of origin and the degree of satisfaction of material needs during childhood may encourage materialism in young adults. Of the

three research hypotheses subjected to testing, two were corroborated. It has been shown that materialism is a consequence of being brought up in a family with low socioeconomic status (Hypothesis 1) and of the experience of deprivation during childhood (Hypothesis 2). These conclusions are consistent with the results of research carried out in countries with a developed consumption culture. These results show that the low socioeconomic status of the family of origin and the experience of deprivation at an early stage of life increase the attractiveness of material goods and money (Chaplin et al., 2014; Cohen & Cohen, 1996, as cited in Kasser et al., 2003; Kasser et al., 1995).

The present study of the impact of socioeconomic variables on the materialism of young adults took into account not only the experience of deprivation, but also that of overabundance. According to Hypothesis 3, spoiling the child with money and material goods should foster the materialistic orientation. However, no such pattern was found. The analyses have shown that the experience of overabundance is negatively correlated with only one aspect of materialism: *Possessions as a source of happiness*.⁴ This result, though surprising, can be explained. One may assume that a child growing up in an environment with an overabundance of goods considers possessing them a natural condition. The child has never experienced deprivation and therefore does not treat goods as important. Possession is the norm. Moreover, though surrounded by goods, the child does not feel happy. Thus, there is no perceived link between happiness in life and possession of goods (as evidenced by the low score on the Material Values Scale). Similar conclusions were reached by authors who studied the determinants of the child's well-being (Ipsos MORI Nairn, 2011). Their qualitative research was carried out in three countries: the UK, Spain, and Sweden. A complex methodology was used, which involved ethnographic analysis of data from 24 case studies, each focusing on a single family. In addition, the researchers conducted 36 focus group interviews and 12 individual in-depth interviews with children aged 8-11, attending 21 different schools in the three countries studied. It turned out that children surrounded by goods did not feel happy at all. It is not new toys, clothes, and gadgets that produce a sense of well-being, but the time spent with parents and friends. This is aptly illustrated by the results of one of the experiments carried out as part of the study, in which children were asked which child was happier: one who did not have many expensive things but could spend a great deal of time with the parents, or one who did not see the parents very often but was surrounded by desirable goods of popular brands. The vast major-

⁴ This scale is an element of the Material Values Scale, developed by Richins (2004); it measures the tendency to identify the possession of material goods as a source of happiness.

ity of children in the three countries chose the former option. The authors of the report pointed out another alarming issue (consistent with the results of the presented research): children who were showered with goods by their parents ceased to perceive the overabundance. This situation was accurately described by a 9-year-old boy from the UK, who, sitting in a room filled with expensive toys, argued that he “did not really feel spoiled, because he did not get everything he would like to get, every day” (“he did not get it, though he could”).

So far, the relation between excessive satisfaction of material needs and materialistic orientation has not been studied in Poland. Researchers looked for the causes of materialism mainly in material deprivation during childhood. Such a research strategy was adopted by Górnik-Durose and Dziedzic (2013). However, what they found surprised them. It turned out that wealth, rather than material deprivation, produced the materialistic orientation in the young people who participated in the study ($N = 149$). The better their assessment of the material conditions of their family of origin, the higher they scored in terms of their preference for extrinsically oriented goals, especially money, image, and fame. The researchers explained this result in two ways. Firstly, it occurs as a consequence of the potentially greater ability of families that adopt materialistic models to secure better material living conditions for themselves. Thus, growing up in a wealthy family becomes part of the path of socialization (materialism is a product of imitation, not deprivation). Secondly, respondents with a materialistic orientation may distort their assessment of their living conditions to satisfy their need to present themselves in a particular way. Materialistic participants may describe the conditions in which they grew up as better than they really were. However, this is contradicted by the present study and the results of Maison’s research (2013, 2014a, 2014b). Individuals with a materialistic orientation are usually convinced that they do not have enough, even if they have more than others. The “trap of materialism” is precisely this insatiable craving.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

When interpreting the results of the study, one should note certain limitations. There are two main issues to consider: the structure of the sample and the adopted research strategy.

The sample. Most respondents recruited for the study had a positive perception of their parents in all the areas under analysis. Due to this imbalance, it was necessary either to apply the logarithm to the data before they could be used as

input in the regression model or to use nonparametric tests to describe the clusters defined in the clustering analysis. It would be interesting to replicate this study on a sample with a more balanced perception of parenting and socializing behavior, so as to further test the conclusions presented in this paper. It should also be pointed out that 66.5% of the respondents were women. Though the existing research into the genesis of materialism in individuals does not suggest that this process is different in women and in men (cf. Górnik-Durose & Dziezic, 2013; Kasser et al., 1995; Maison, 2013, 2014a, 2014b), it cannot be ruled out that this disproportion in the sample affected the results. Therefore, as already mentioned, it is advisable to replicate the present study on a sample with a balanced proportion of men and women and with greater variation in the variables under study.

Research strategy. The fact that no data collected directly from parents and their children was analyzed could be considered a weakness of the present study. Rather, the focus was on subjective feelings about the quality of parental and socializing interactions. The effectiveness of the parents' influence on the child was assessed in this way. This kind of research strategy, based as it is on retrospective assessment of childhood by adults, requires the use of self-report questionnaires. While such tools are widely accepted in studies of parental attitudes (cf. Plopa, 2008) and materialism (cf. Flouri, 1999, 2004), and although, without exception, they were found to have satisfactory psychometric parameters, they are nevertheless susceptible to situational and temporal factors, which may result in distorted recollections.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Thinking about the important role of the family in the process that leads to materialism, one might consider a longitudinal study. This would be the only way to prove that early childhood experience (including the experience of material deprivation and overabundance) leads to materialism in adulthood. The complexity of materialism and the multiplicity of variables that affect it make it necessary to go beyond quantitative analysis. Therefore, when designing such research, one should consider alternative, non-quantitative methods of measurement. Qualitative methodology, used in Chaplin and colleagues (2014) and in Nairn (Ipsos MORI & Nairn, 2011), cited in the Introduction and Discussion sections, has great potential. Interviews with parents and children, augmented with elements of ethnographic observation and non-standard methods of mea-

surement (collage), can be of great value as complementary to quantitative data. These methods allow the researcher to “see” and thereby to understand more accurately the mechanisms that underlie the formation of the materialistic orientation in young people.

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