
24. Materialism as self-identity maintenance

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Materialism has many faces, most of them bad. Although the original use of the term around the 15th century did not focus on consumption or consumerism, by the turn of the 20th century, it had developed into a pejorative that was associated with hedonism and a preference for worldly goods over spirituality (Rustagi & Shrum, 2018; Steinfeld, 2016). It was also around this time that Theodore Veblen (1899) published his classic critique of social and economic institutions, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, in which he introduced the term *conspicuous consumption*, a flaunting of wealth and material goods to signal social status (Sundie et al., 2011). Although Veblen did not explicitly use the word materialism in that book, it came to embody the notion of materialism as excessive (even obsessive) concern with signaling status through material goods (Steinfeld, 2016).

These negative faces of materialism can also be seen in contemporary conceptualizations of materialism: the importance and centrality of possessions in people's lives (Richins & Dawson, 1992), a set of undesirable personality traits (envy, possessiveness, nongenerosity; Belk, 1985), an emphasis on frivolous extrinsic motivations (fame, financial success, beauty) at the expense of more admirable intrinsic motivations (self-acceptance, affiliation; Kasser, 2002), a focus on lower-order needs (material comfort) over higher-order needs (belonging; Inglehart, 1990), and preferences for material goods over social experiences (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Perhaps not surprisingly, research that has operationalized these conceptualizations finds that the effects of materialism are overwhelmingly negative (for reviews, see Ahuvia & Wong, 2002; Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002; Dittmar et al., 2014; Kasser, 2002; Richins, 2017; Shrum et al., 2022).

In this chapter, we propose a different view of materialism; one that views it in a more agnostic rather than negative way. Specifically, we conceptualize materialism in terms of self-identity motives that are addressed through consumption, and we adopt the definition of Shrum et al. (2013), in which materialism is "the extent to which individuals attempt to engage in the construction and maintenance of the self through the acquisition and use of products, services, experiences, or relationships that are perceived to provide desirable symbolic value" (Shrum et al., 2013, p. 1180; see Bagozzi et al., 2020 for a similar definition).

The link between materialism and self-identity is not new. Richins and Dawson's (1992) success dimension of their Material Values Scale measures the extent to which people believe that material goods and wealth are signals of success, and Richins' (2017) model of pathways to materialism integrates identity motives as antecedents to the development of material values. Kasser's dimension of extrinsic motives, such as financial success and social recognition, is related to other-signaling (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Our definition differs by explicitly

linking materialism to self-identity maintenance and focusing on behaviors and their underlying motives. Thus, the critical indicator of materialism is the motive for the acquisition (self-identity motive), not the acquisition itself (e.g., whether the motive for purchasing a luxury product is to symbolically signal status or for its superior performance). Two advantages of this conceptualization are that it allows for situational examinations (e.g., experimental manipulations) of the materialism process, and it does not define materialism in terms of negative personal qualities, allowing for the consideration that materialism may at times have positive utility (Bagozzi et al., 2020).

In the remainder of this chapter, we review the most recent research on materialism in the context of our conceptualization of materialism as self-identity maintenance. We structure the review around fundamental identity motives that are the core of self-identity (Vignoles et al., 2006) and discuss how people use possessions to develop and maintain a healthy self-concept and how effective these efforts are. We conclude with a discussion of the efficacy of materialism and symbolic compensatory consumption in improving psychological well-being.

MATERIALISM, SELF-IDENTITY, AND CONSUMPTION

Possessions are inextricably entwined with self-identity. William James (1890, p. 291) considered the self to be a “sum total” of not only one’s mental and physical qualities, but also one’s relatives, friends, reputation, and possessions, and Belk (1988, p. 139) similarly considered possessions as part of the “extended self.” Possessions are often highly visible and thus serve as useful tools for communicating desired identities to ourselves and others (Berger & Ward, 2010; Douglas & Isherwood, 1979; Veblen, 1899). People use possessions to signal both conformity and distinctiveness (Berger & Heath, 2007; Lowrey et al., 2001), and children learn to decode these signals at a very young age (Chaplin & Lowrey, 2010).

Signaling the Self through Consumption

Possessions are useful signals of self-identity through their symbolic value (Dittmar, 1992; Goffman, 1951; Levy, 1959; Solomon, 1983), which is a function of their objective qualities (price, function, etc.) and subjective qualities (brand associations, brand personality, etc.). In defining materialism as the extent to which people use possessions to construct and maintain their self-identity, implicit in this definition is that some people use possessions as identity signals more than others, and the more someone relies on possessions to signal self-identity, the more materialistic they are (Bagozzi et al., 2020). In this regard, we focus on the motives for acquiring and displaying particular possessions—whether the motive is intended as a symbolic signal of self-identity.

Compensatory consumption

Symbolic signaling through possessions is often prominent when people experience threats to their self-identity. People want to feel good about themselves. In self-identity terms, they want to maintain a positive and stable self-concept (beliefs about themselves and who they want to be; Baumeister, 1999; Leary et al., 1995), and consequently, they regularly monitor their social environment for information that validates their desired self-view (self-verification; Rucker & Cannon, 2019; Swann, 1983). Sometimes, however, the self-verification process does not

yield the desired confirmatory evidence. People occasionally, maybe even often, experience setbacks that threaten core aspects of their self-concept: being passed over for an important promotion, failing an important exam, or being turned down for membership in an exclusive club. Thus, instead of providing confirmation of their self-identity related to competence, intelligence, or status, the self-verification process reveals a gap or discrepancy between qualities of their current self and their ideal (desired) self. Higgins (1987, p. 319) refers to these gaps as “self-discrepancies.” These can be chronic. Some people may have chronically low self-esteem, may generally feel powerless, or may frequently feel their belongingness needs are not being met. Self-discrepancies can also be temporary, produced by certain situations that momentarily lower self-esteem (failure on a test), feelings of power (laid off from work), or feelings of belonging (socially excluded).

Regardless of the temporal nature of self-discrepancies, they are psychologically aversive, and thus threatened people are highly motivated to reduce these self-discrepancies by bolstering their self-worth such that their current and ideal selves are sufficiently aligned (*self-repair*; Shrum et al., 2025). Although there are multiple avenues available for coping with self-threats (Tesser, 2000), one way is through consumption—consuming products that bolster an important aspect of self-identity. Rucker and colleagues refer to this process as *compensatory consumption* (Mandel et al., 2017; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008, 2013), defining it as “the desire for, acquisition, or use of products to respond to a psychological need or deficit” (Rucker & Galinsky, 2013, p. 207), and thus it refers not only to actual consumption (behavior) but also to beliefs, attitudes, and preferences. The key aspect is that response to the self-threat involves a change or shift in consumption-related thoughts or behaviors (Rucker et al., 2025).

Symbolic self-completion

Rucker and colleagues (Mandel et al., 2017; Rucker & Cannon, 2019; Rucker et al., 2025) detail multiple ways that consumption can be used to remedy a self-discrepancy (e.g., direct resolution, escapism, etc.). One potential remedy that is relevant to our focus on materialism, self-identity, and symbolic consumption is *symbolic self-completion*. Symbolic self-completion theory (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982) proposes that people may cope with self-discrepancies by engaging in behaviors that symbolically signal competence, success, or mastery in the threatened domain. Self-discrepancies, particularly for important, central self-identities, create a sense of incompleteness, and thus identity-threatened people are motivated to return to a sense of completeness by displaying identity markers (Carr & Vignoles, 2011). Across a series of studies, Wicklund and colleagues (Braun & Wicklund, 1989; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982) observed that the more insecure people were in an important identity (e.g., MBA student, tennis player, lawyer), the more likely they were to display or prefer products symbolic of accomplishment in that identity domain (cf. Braun & Wicklund, 1989; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). For example, first-year university students owned more university-branded products than fourth-year students, and the number of university products was positively correlated with their self-reported prestige of the school (Braun & Wicklund, 1989). In another study, male MBA students who lacked clear objective indicators of success compared to their peers (lower GPA [grade point average], fewer job offers) were more likely to display symbolic indicators of status and success (expensive watches, suits, briefcases, etc.) (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). Thus, when people experience self-discrepancies, they may engage in symbolic self-completion through consumption, which fits our definition of materialism. Indeed, higher levels of materialism are associated with larger self-discrepancies (Carr

& Vignoles, 2011; Dittmar, 2005) and greater concern with social identity (Christopher & Schlenker, 2004).

MATERIALISM, SELF-IDENTITY THREAT, AND COMPENSATORY CONSUMPTION

One way of testing our conceptualization of materialism as consuming to manage one's self-identity is to examine how people respond when important aspects of their self-identity are threatened. Do individuals respond in consistent ways when self-discrepancies develop, and are these responses consumption-related? In the next sections, we review research that addresses this question. We structure the discussion around three core dimensions of self-identity (Vignoles et al., 2006) that have received the most attention in consumer psychological research: efficacy, self-esteem, and belongingness. We also include a discussion of research on self-concept clarity, which is the extent to which people are uncertain about their identity in general.

Efficacy

Efficacy motives are concerned with managing feelings of competence and control (Breakwell, 1993; Pandelaere & Shrum, 2020; Vignoles et al., 2006). Here we take an expansive view of efficacy to include power (control over resources; Keltner et al., 2003; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Rucker & Galinsky, 2017) and status (respect, esteem, and admiration from others; Blader & Chen, 2012; Magee & Galinsky, 2008), which have been a frequent focus in consumer research (Rucker et al., 2025).

Competence

People may use products to signal competence in several ways. For example, consumers are willing to pay more for products they assist in creating (including mere self-assembly) than for the same products made by others, termed the IKEA effect (Norton et al., 2012), because the self-creation process signals competence to both themselves and to others (Mochon et al., 2012). Threats to competence can also trigger consumption as a remedy. For example, in experiments in which participants' intelligence was threatened, compared to non-threatened participants, intelligence-threatened participants compensated by indicating a greater preference for products that were symbolic of intelligence, such as dictionaries (Kim & Rucker, 2012), scientific exhibitions (Rustagi & Shrum, 2019), and fountain pens (Gao et al., 2009; Kim & Gal, 2014).

Power and status

Power and status motives have received considerable attention in consumer psychological research because of their presumed effects on the acquisition and display of luxury goods. Luxury goods signal high levels of economic resources, and status brands can signal high social standing (Sundie et al., 2011; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). Thus, people may use products to signal—either to themselves or others—high levels of power and status, particularly people who feel deficits in their feelings of personal power (power self-discrepancy). Both correlational and experimental studies support this reasoning. Chronically low levels of power

are associated with higher levels of materialism in children (Gentina et al., 2018b) and adults (Kashdan & Breen, 2007; Kim et al., 2017). Other indirect evidence can be seen in studies investigating the effects of economic inequality. Living in a high economic inequality geographic area may heighten status concerns. For example, income inequality is associated with higher levels of status anxiety (Melita et al., 2021; Pybus et al., 2022), and living in a higher-income inequality region is associated with higher levels of social comparison (Cheung & Lucas, 2016), greater interest in status goods (cf. Walasek & Brown, 2015, 2016), and higher spending on status goods (Bricker et al., 2020). Moreover, those from certain lower socio-economic groups have been shown to spend a larger proportion of their income on positional goods (Bagwell & Bernheim, 1996; Moav & Neeman, 2012), and greater income inequality can lead to increased consumer borrowing to “keep up with the Joneses” through spending on positional goods (Christen & Morgan, 2005).

Experimental manipulations of power and status show similar findings. For example, across several sets of studies, participants whose feelings of personal power were threatened were willing to pay more for status products (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008; Rucker et al., 2014; Rustagi & Shrum, 2019) and engage in more conspicuous consumption (Rucker and Galinsky 2009) compared to non-threatened participants, but these effects were eliminated when power was boosted (Lee & Shrum, 2012; Lee et al., 2017). Similarly, priming a mindset of economic inequality increases preference for status consumption and endorsement of material values (Velandia-Morales et al., 2022).

Although most of the research we have reviewed on the effects of power on status consumption looks at the effects of power deficits, feelings of higher personal power can also influence materialistic consumption. For example, Rucker et al. (2014) manipulated both experience of power (high, low) and expectations of power. When participants were primed to think about the *experience* of power, power threats increased status consumption compared to power boosts, consistent with previous research. However, the results were reversed when participants were primed to think about *expectations* of power: high power expectations increased status consumption compared to low power expectations. Thus, materialistic consumption can be influenced by norms and expectations as well as deficits in the self-concept.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to how we feel about ourselves in general (how we feel about our self-concept; Baumeister, 1999), and self-esteem can be personal (how I feel about myself, how well I am doing) and social (how I think others feel about me and how well they think I am doing; Leary et al., 1995). Numerous studies have documented a link between chronic self-esteem deficits and materialism. For example, across several correlational studies using different measures of materialism and self-esteem, lower levels of self-esteem were associated with higher levels of materialism for both children (Chaplin & John, 2007, 2010; Gentina et al., 2018a; Zawadzka et al., 2021) and adults (Chang & Arkin, 2002; Kim et al., 2017; Reeves et al., 2012; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010). Experimental studies that temporarily produce self-discrepancies in self-esteem provide causal evidence of the link between self-esteem and materialism. For example, experimental manipulations of social exclusion that created self-esteem deficits increased compensatory consumption (higher levels of charitable donations), but the effect was eliminated when self-esteem was boosted (Lee & Shrum, 2012; Lee et al., 2017). Similarly, experimentally boosting self-esteem decreased children's levels of

materialism (Chaplin & John, 2007; Jiang et al., 2015) and reduced demand for status goods (Bursztyn et al., 2018).

Belongingness

The need to belong is one of the most powerful human motives. Social connections and support are critical for survival (resource sharing, mutual protection) and psychological health (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Williams, 2007). Perceiving that one's social connections are emotionally lacking and one's belongingness needs are not being met results in feelings of loneliness (Hawkey & Cacioppo, 2010), which, like the other identity threats, is a psychologically aversive state from which people are highly motivated to escape. One avenue for escape is through consumption (for a review, see Shrum et al., 2023), and numerous studies have found a connection between materialism and loneliness. Loneliness and general social connection deficits are associated with a greater love for material possessions (Lastovicka & Sirianni, 2011), stronger self-brand connections (Loh et al., 2021), and higher levels of materialism (Ang et al., 2014; Gentina et al., 2018a; Kashdan & Breen, 2007; Pieters, 2013).

Although the studies just noted suggest that there are relationships among belongingness, self-discrepancies, and materialistic orientations, they are correlational, and thus the causal relation is ambiguous. One ambiguity is the causal direction. It may be that feelings of loneliness cause people to turn to material goods to alleviate the pain of loneliness, consistent with a compensatory consumption explanation. Alternatively, placing a higher value on material goods may increase feelings of loneliness. Prioritizing extrinsic goals such as materialism may crowd out intrinsic goals such as social relations, leading to loneliness (Kasser, 2016; Pieters, 2013). Pieters (2013) addressed this issue by analyzing longitudinal data over six years using a latent growth model, which allows for inferences about reciprocal effects that materialism and loneliness may have on each other. The results indeed showed bidirectional effects. Loneliness at Time 1 positively predicted materialism at Time 2 (across the six years), and materialism at Time 1 positively predicted loneliness at Time 2. However, the results also suggested that the effect of loneliness on materialism was greater than the reverse effect, consistent with a compensatory consumption mechanism in which participants compensate for a self-identity threat through materialistic consumption (Shrum et al., 2013).

Experimental research provides convergent evidence of the link between materialism and belongingness needs. In one study, social exclusion increased preferences for anthropomorphized brands, and this effect was mediated by participants' need for social affiliation (Chen et al., 2017). Presumably, the exclusion-induced belongingness deficit increased participants' desire to establish a relationship with a brand, and the anthropomorphizing of the brand facilitated this connection, which is consistent with research showing that interacting with anthropomorphic products can restore feelings of belongingness (Mourey et al., 2017).

Consumers also use products to directly facilitate social connection. For example, compared to non-threatened participants, participants whose belongingness needs were threatened were willing to pay more for a food item that was ostensibly liked by their partner in the study, even though they disliked the food (Mead et al., 2011). In another study, threats to belongingness increased preferences for nostalgic products because they facilitated reconnection with the past (Loveland et al., 2010). Finally, the reverse is also true: boosting feelings of belongingness and interpersonal security reduces the value that people place on mundane possessions (e.g., a blanket or a pen) (Clark et al., 2011).

Self-concept Clarity

In the previous sections, we discussed how threats to specific aspects of the self-concept can foster a general materialistic orientation and the use of material goods to repair a damaged self-concept. In this section, we focus on self-doubt more generally, which is captured by the construct of self-concept clarity. Self-concept clarity is the extent to which the self-concept is clearly defined and stable (Campbell, 1990). Although highly correlated with self-esteem (Campbell et al., 1996; Wong et al., 2016), they are empirically distinguishable constructs. Self-concept clarity is considered more of a cognitive construct (knowledge component of the self-concept) and a precursor to the more affective self-esteem construct (evaluative component; Weber et al., 2023).

Low self-concept clarity is characterized by high psychological uncertainty, which is an unpleasant state that people are highly motivated to remedy (Lee-Flynn et al., 2011; Richins, 2024). Thus, like specific self-discrepancies, low self-concept clarity typically produces the same types of compensatory consumption that specific self-threats do. For example, across numerous studies, low self-concept clarity is associated with higher materialism (Martin et al., 2019; Mittal, 2015; Noguti & Bokeyar, 2014; Reeves et al., 2012) and buying products for impression management motives (Gil et al., 2012). The tendency for low self-concept clarity individuals to use material goods to reduce self-discrepancies may be driven by higher social comparison tendencies, particularly upward comparisons (Butzer & Kuiper, 2006; Vartanian & Dey, 2013), which increase the chances of experiencing self-discrepancies (Richins, 2024; Tesser, 1991).

Although self-concept clarity may vary from time to time within individuals, and self-doubt can be easily primed, it is considered a relatively stable construct that can develop early in childhood and persist through adulthood (Crocetti et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2010). Thus, low self-concept clarity can have particularly insidious effects. Those with low self-concept clarity are more vulnerable to self-threats and have stronger negative responses to upward social comparisons (for a review, see Richins, 2024). This increased vulnerability, frequency, and negative intensity of self-threats may increase the likelihood that people with low self-concept clarity engage in compensatory consumption and adopt a materialistic mindset, and may also explain why they are more susceptible to interpersonal influence and marketer influence (Richins, 2024).

Although most research on the effects of low self-concept clarity treats the concept as a measurable stable trait, some experimental studies provide convergent evidence. For example, priming self-doubt increases endorsement of material values (Chang & Arkin, 2002) and desire for status products (Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010). In a study that investigated discrepancies between explicit and implicit self-esteem (which may reflect low self-concept clarity because the discrepancy suggests a self-inconsistency), both measures and manipulations of self-esteem discrepancies were associated with higher levels of materialism (Park & John, 2011).

EFFICACY OF SELF-IDENTITY MAINTENANCE THROUGH MATERIALISM

If consumers attempt to manage their self-concept through consumption, one important question is whether it is an effective strategy. That is, are material goods effective in maintaining the desired self-identity (ideal self) or effective in restoring a damaged self-identity? In reviewing the literature, the results are mixed and tend to vary as a function of research method: short-term situational experiences of self-threat (through experimental inductions) versus longer-term investigations of chronic measures of self-deficits (cross-sectional, longitudinal). Several experimental studies find that compensating for self-threats through symbolic self-completion can effectively diminish experimentally induced self-discrepancies. For example, among those who were threatened regarding an important aspect of their self-identity (e.g., intelligence: Gao et al., 2009; Rustagi & Shrum, 2019; power: Rustagi & Shrum, 2019), initially compensating through selection of a product symbolically related to the self-threat domain eliminated any subsequent compensatory behavior. This suggests that the initial compensatory consumption sufficiently eliminated the self-discrepancy. Similarly, in a study that investigated the effects of threats to belongingness, a before–after design in which belongingness was measured showed that the symbolic compensatory consumption restored feelings of belongingness to their initial pre-threat level (Loveland et al., 2010). Although these three sets of studies are too few from which to draw firm conclusions, the results suggest that compensatory consumption through symbolic self-completion can effectively restore a momentary self-discrepancy. However, it is also worth noting that in some cases, the compensatory consumption process can backfire and actually make things worse. For example, making an explicit connection between the self-threat domain (e.g., intelligence threat) and the symbolically related compensatory product (e.g., including the slogan for *National Geographic* “Informative, Intelligent, Insightful,” which explicitly mentions intelligence) may not only be ineffective; it could cause rumination about the self-threat and decrease self-control (cf. Lisjak et al., 2015; Rustagi & Shrum, 2019, 2024).

Cross-sectional and longitudinal research paints a decidedly different picture. Most such research finds that materialism is negatively correlated with various indicators of well-being (e.g., life satisfaction, compulsive buying, negative self-appraisals, happiness) (Dittmar et al., 2014; for a review, see Shrum et al., 2022). Although most of the research is correlational, and thus open to alternative explanations, some high-powered longitudinal studies test reciprocal relations and rule out alternatives (other-variable explanations). We discussed one earlier: Pieters’ six-year longitudinal study ($n = 2,789$) that tested for reciprocal effects between materialism and loneliness. Those results show that increases in loneliness cause increases in later materialism, but increases in materialism can in turn cause increases in later loneliness, suggesting that using material goods to combat or substitute for belongingness self-deficits is counterproductive. However, a deeper dig into the findings revealed some nuances. The relations just noted were for a composite measure of materialism using the 18-item Material Values Scale (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Estimating the effects using each of the three subscales of the full scale (happiness, success, and centrality) yielded different and contrasting effects. Increases in both the happiness facet (belief that more possessions bring greater happiness) and the success facet (belief that possessions are indicators of success) caused later increases in loneliness (and vice-versa), whereas increases in the centrality dimension (the

general importance of possessions) reduced loneliness over time. These latter findings suggest that for some people, possessions may provide a salve that reduces feelings of loneliness.

Another high-powered longitudinal study ($n = 6,551$ over three years) testing the relationship between materialism and life satisfaction also provided ambiguous findings (Jaspers et al., 2023). Analyses using the traditional Cross-Lagged Panel Model (CLPM) revealed negative bidirectional relations between materialism (also using the Material Values Scale) and life satisfaction, consistent with previous longitudinal research (Kasser et al., 2014). However, CLPMs do not separate between-person (inter-individual) and within-person (intra-individual) effects, and thus cannot control for potential trait-like, time-invariant confounders. In contrast, when Jaspers et al.'s (2023) analyses used Random Intercept Cross-Lagged Panel Models (RI-CLPMs), which do separate between- and within-person effects, no within-person effects were observed. That is, changes in materialism within individuals did not cause subsequent changes in life satisfaction, nor did changes in life satisfaction within individuals result in subsequent changes in materialism. These results argue against a direct causal effect of general materialism on life satisfaction. However, further ambiguity was observed when the data were analyzed as a function of the three dimensions of the Material Values Scale. Only the effect of life satisfaction on the happiness dimension showed within-person effects over time. If an individual experienced a reduction in life satisfaction at one point in time, they subsequently developed stronger beliefs that possessions would make them happier, but not vice-versa (increases in materialism did not result in changes in life satisfaction). The combination of results suggests that people do compensate for self-deficits through materialistic pursuits, but this does not lead to greater happiness.

CONCLUSION

Self-identity concerns play a central role in consumption decisions. Diverse scholars have long held that what we own highly reflects who we are (Belk, 1988; Douglas & Isherwood, 1979; Fournier, 1998; James, 1890; Veblen, 1899). We have reviewed research that supports this proposition and explains the underlying processes. Consumers purchase products to develop and maintain different aspects of the self-concept (efficacy, self-esteem, belongingness, stability), and this process is particularly evident when people experience threats to core aspects of their self-concept, which produces a self-discrepancy (discrepancy between their current and ideal selves). Moreover, such compensatory consumption to reduce self-discrepancies often involves the purchase of products for their symbolic value—what they signal about a person. We have defined this process of self-identity maintenance through symbolic consumption as materialism and reviewed evidence showing that various measures of materialism and situational threats to self-identity produce the same general pattern of effects on, or relations with, consumption. However, whether such practices are healthy is an open question. Only a few experimental studies have assessed the effectiveness of compensatory consumption through symbolic self-completion, and even fewer longitudinal studies with high statistical power have tested longer-term efficacy. Thus, determining the extent to which materialistic goal pursuit—whether momentarily or as a basic tendency—is helpful, harmful, or benign should be a top priority for future research in this area.

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