

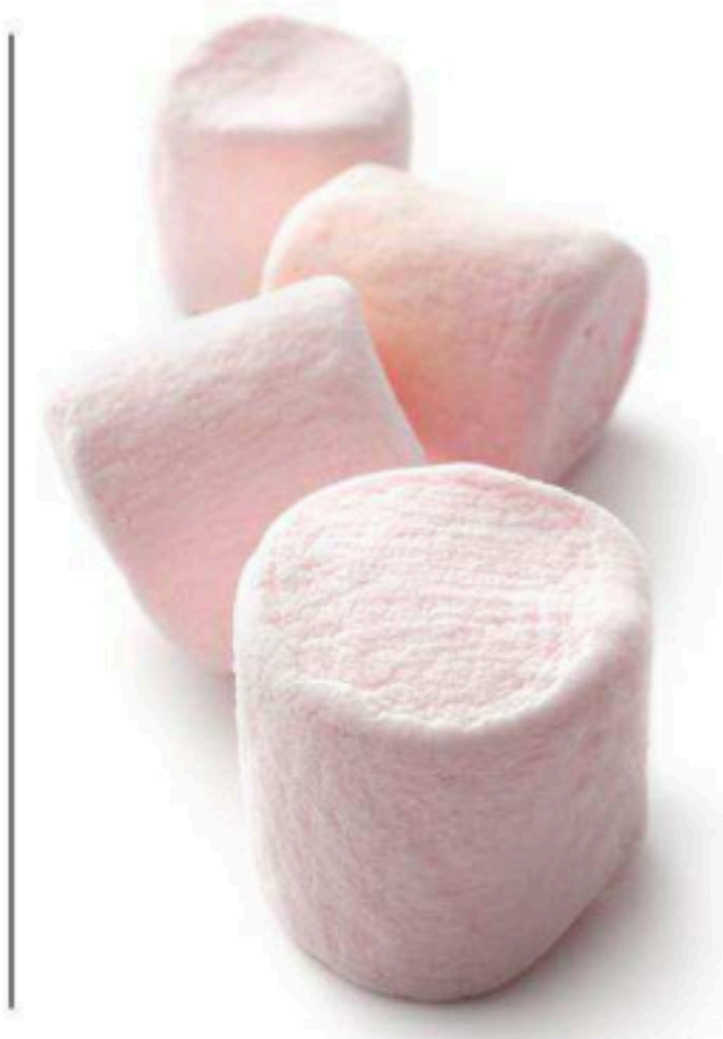
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Sweet Science: A Cross-Cultural Marshmallow Test

THE UNIVERSAL STRUGGLE: choosing between immediate gratification and long-term rewards.

The “marshmallow test,” a psychology classic from the early '70s, evaluates this skill, called self-regulation, in children. A researcher asks a child to sit alone in a room with a treat. The kid can eat it right away, but waiting 10 to 15 minutes for the researcher to return will grant the child a second treat.

Previously, experts tested primarily Western children. But in June, German psychologists published the first marshmallow test using Western and



non-Western participants, about 200 kids total.

The team found that 4-year-olds from Cameroonian farming families in West Africa bested their German middle-class counterparts. Only 28 percent of the German children earned an extra treat, whereas 70 percent of the Cameroonian children scored a second one; 10 percent even fell asleep waiting.

These children differ in many ways, so the dramatic results, reported in *Child Development*, likely stem from a blend of influences. Next, the researchers say they want to investigate strategies the children used to help them wait. —SYLVIA MORROW