



Affluenza: When Too Much is Never Enough

Clive Hamilton , Richard Denniss

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Anyone concerned about the level of their personal debt or frustrated by the rat race of aspiring to an affluent lifestyle will appreciate this critique of the effects of over-consumption. This analysis pulls no punches as it describes both the problem and what can be done to stop it. Analyzing the increasing rates of stress, depression, and obesity as possible effects of the consumption binge currently gripping the Western world, this report tracks how Australians overwork, the growing number of things thrown out, self-medicated drugs, and the real meaning of the word choice.

Affluenza: When Too Much is Never Enough Details

Date : Published April 1st 2006 by Allen Unwin (first published June 1st 2005)

ISBN : 9781741146714

Author : Clive Hamilton , Richard Denniss

Format : Paperback 240 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Economics, Sociology

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From Reader Review *Affluenza: When Too Much is Never Enough* for online ebook

Kelly says

Little dated (pre GFC)

Cat says

LAST TIME I WILL EVER BE FORCED TO READ A TERRIBLE BOOK FOR HIGH SCHOOL

BookRebel (GinaRoseox11) says

Had to read this for school, included some interesting facts about how advertising is corrupting the world, but isn't the type of book I would usually read.

Libby says

I think that it should be compulsory reading for:

- a) Every Secondary School student in Australia.
- b) People who own \$2700 Louis Vuitton yoga mats and buy sleeping bags for their ferrets.
- d) People who measure their self-worth and happiness by money.
- e) ... OK everybody should read it :)

As I was reading this I felt nauseous at just how wasteful and affluent our country has become at the expense of what truly matters. I never really ever entered the whole "rat race, keeping up with the Joneses" thing myself as I just had no interest in materialism(much to the bemusement and derision of some family members and the odd acquaintance) but recently our little family has been faced with some decisions brought about by the birth of our first child and drop to one income with a mortgage. Instead of entering the rat race to keep up we made a very easy decision to not even go there...so I guess that makes us down-downshiffters - the whole slow lifestyle just makes sense to us and we wouldn't have it any other way :)

The closing paragraph describes a dystopian future where people keep blindly accumulating "stuff" until society is one big mess of waste, psychological disorders, fractured relationships and lives without meaning. I echo the hopes of the authors in the last sentence of this paragraph: "We believe the people of Australia will not accept such a future".

Kate says

The one thing I really disliked about this book was that it saw the only way to cope with Affluenza was to downshift. But what about those people who are able to manage things without going between extremes. What about those who spend within their means, don't go into debt, and only ever work a 30-35 hour week in the first place. Why are these people not mentioned? It isn't a one or the other proposition and not everyone needs to be fixed of these problems.

Donald says

I wonder if the people who need to read this book ever will. If they do I hope they are not so confronted by it that they cannot hear its message.

As a downshifter myself I completely agree with Mr Hamilton. I am disgusted at what humanity has become. We are capable of truly great things but find ourselves striving for everything shiny and flashy and useless at the expense of everything that we truly value but have forgotten. Affluenza, the idea and the fight against it, is worth five stars.

But to the book itself I can only give three. The interesting and ghastly stats are presented well however they are broken up with corny anecdotes without reference. These little lame snippets are probably based on some reality but they have no place here. In particular I roll my eyes at the story of the father taking the boy sailing and writing in his diary 'wasted day'. It breaks my heart and enrages my mind!

In light of the global financial crisis this book is particularly prescient. Hamilton told us we are living beyond our means in 2004. We continued scaling up our credit until bang: in late 2007 our bubble burst and we found ourselves in the most severe financial crisis in 50 years. Hamilton predicted this. Now Western governments are attempting to continue the delusion by promoting consumerism as a remedy to this mess. We are digging our hole deeper and deeper.

This book made me question myself and how I live my life. For this alone I recommend it strongly.

Ester says

I'm really glad our school forced us to read this, because I believe this book speaks the truth. Many Australians are indeed infected with Affluenza.

Andrew Ma says

Just some insights into how stupidly wasteful and status obsessed with population is.

Karly says

This book very clearly sums up the general malaise in Australia today that I could never quite put my finger on. It forces you to check and take stock of your life and reflect on all the fortune we have. The manifesto gives hope for a future where value is no longer placed on material possessions, but on the quality of our relationships and an appreciation for all that we have. An important read for all Aussies I think.

Liam Polkinghorne says

Since the early 1990s Australia has been infected with affluenza - a growing and unhealthy preoccupation with money and material things. It manifests in overconsumption, and leading us to derive our identities through our consumption activity. The goal is to close the gap between our vision of ourselves, and our actual selves - tying our self-worth to material benchmarks. More money and more things doesn't result in more happiness, and as a result, Australians feel materially deprived, despite being richer than ever before. no matter how much money people have they feel they need more - an ever-present comparison to their neighbours (who we see as having great lifestyles - we should have that too - we deserve it more - although they are more likely than not in a lot of debt). Perceived needs change as income rises. The confusion between wants and needs is at the heart of affluenza. It also lies behind the epidemic of overwork - people feel they must work longer to meet ever-rising aspirations - imposing severe costs on health and generating relationship debts. 4 out of 5 people believe themselves to be careful shoppers, but acknowledge Australian society is characterised by high levels of aimless spending. Conscious consumption, as opposed to no consumption is the antidote to affluenza. Need to constantly battle against growing materialism.

Lynley says

Last year I read a book by the same title by British author Oliver James, which I thoroughly enjoyed, so I was interested to read more about affluenza in Australia.

There should be a special place reserved in hell for people who write in library books, and writing your marginalia in pencil is no better than writing in indelible ink, because nobody actually goes back and rubs out their pencil markings, do they? An officious (and I think elderly) person who'd borrowed this book before me had annotated paragraphs with ticks and crosses and may have thereby contributed to my overall feeling that this is a preachy book, drawing a distinct line between 'them' and 'us' - 'them' being 'young people today' and 'the rest of us'. I hate that. As someone who was born in 1978, on the cusp of Gen X and Gen Y, I'm never sure whether I count as a young, irresponsible person or as one of the old, sensible generation. I haven't yet worked out whether this feeling is particular to those of us born in the late seventies, or whether it's the nature of being in your early thirties - old enough to know better, but too young to understand what hardship is really like.

I suppose I shall find out in due course.

While I agree wholeheartedly with the underlying premise of this book - that as a society we are too materialistic - I didn't like the tone of it. Sure, lots of Australians need a kick up the bum when it comes to credit card debt, but I doubt such people are going to pick up this book and absorb the lecture. I ended up skipping most of that chapter. People who don't pay off their credit cards each month are hardly likely to

respond to reason. The issue is far more complex than that.

It didn't take long for 'plasma TVs' to get a mention, as they always do when it comes to discussions of waste, wealth, youth and disgust. Yet this example only dates the book prematurely. Just try and buy a TV today that's *not* a big flat screen.

My distaste for the tone of this book began with the phrase 'too posh to push', which was offered as one example of Affluenza. Talk about a tenuous link. Besides, the phrase 'too posh to push' is one of those phrases I'd like to see go the way of 'nigger'. It's simply not helpful, and when it comes from two middle-aged men, it's heartily offensive. I know women who have had elective c-sections, but many, many more have had inevitable c-sections. I don't know a single woman who chose a c-section because she was concerned about losing her dignity during childbirth, or because she considered herself above it, as suggested by the phrase 'too posh to push'. There is absolutely no easy way to get a baby out of a woman, and a c-section is not the 'easy option'. Many women are absolutely terrified of birth, and many have good reason.

I could go on and on. Birth by caesarean has nothing to do with affluenza anyway.

The authors seem to have little idea about women and children's issues in general. On page 140 we have a bullet point list illustrating how 'welfare payments and tax concessions to Australia's middle class and the wealthy have become rife'. Number three on the list: 'The Federal Government pays parents \$3000 (rising to \$5000 in 2008) for each new baby. This will cost \$3.5 billion over four years. No one asks why low-income taxpayers should fund a windfall for wealthy people who decide to have a baby'.

As with many things tax related, this entitlement was revised after the change of government. But what irks me is the phrase 'choose to have a baby'. For many parents, raising a family is less 'choice' and more 'drive' or even 'compulsion' (as depicted by Virginia Haussegger in Wonder Woman). I'm therefore wary of those who describe baby-making as a 'lifestyle choice'.

Yet on page 142, not two pages on, we have another little lecture about the corruption of values in our society in regards to working too hard and not making time to have babies: 'Even the most intimate and precious aspects of being human have been subtly transformed into the antithesis. Becoming a parent used to be something we did because it was part of the human condition; now it is a 'lifestyle choice', and it is the consumer approach to parenthood that the Howard Government has appealed to with its package of 'family-friendly' taxing and spending initiatives'.

So even though the authors display their own distaste for 'lifestyle choice', using the apostrophes as a sort of rubber glove to deal with a phrase rather unsanitary, they are seemingly unaware that not two pages prior they contradicted their very own view.

Zoe says

Interesting read on the causes and effects of over-consumption in Australia. Some points could have been expanded on, and some sounded a bit preachy, but overall a thought provoking book.

Zoe Cassar says

I really enjoyed this book. Absolutely readable. You will find yourself reading it aloud to your significant other...or buying it for friends.

Leonie Wilson says

Yep.

Judith says

I liked the message - when do we recognise 'enough'. There are, however, only so many ways to illustrate this concept and this would make a wonderful newspaper editorial more successfully than a book.
