



Affluenza



A 56 minute video

In 2 parts for classrooms- 29/27 minutes

Produced by John de Graaf and Vivia Boe

A co-production of KCTS Seattle & Oregon Public Broadcasting



Teacher's Guide

by

Francine Strickwerda and Ti Locke

AFFLUENZA will expose students to the problem of overconsumption and its effects on the society and the environment. The one-hour program takes a hard, sometimes humorous look at the American passion for shopping, and how it leads to debt and stress for families, communities, the nation and the world. It also explores the strategies used by marketers to sell products to young people. The program is appropriate for students grade 6-12, and in universities, and will be a useful resource for teachers of communications, economics, mathematics, social studies, environmental studies and the arts.

Each activity in this guide references a clip from the video, and discussion questions, which can be used before and after viewing the clip. Counters differ on VHS machines, so the starting and ending points for clips are approximate. Many activities also have background information and reproducible worksheets.

CONTENTS

	Language Arts / Social Studies
3	What is Affluenza?
5	Worksheet- Family Interview
	Communications / Business / Economics
6	Activity #1 What are Advertisers really selling?
8	Activity #2 Who are advertisers selling to?
9	Activity #3 Advertising in Schools
10	Activity #4 Be an Adbuster
	Mathematics / Economics / Life Skills
12	#1 Credit Quandaries
15	Worksheet- Credit Cards: The Fine Print
	Social Studies / Environmental Studies
16	Activity #1 Popcorn Party
18	Activity #2 A Small World
20	Activity #3 A History of Wanting More
21	Worksheet - The Impact of Stuff
	Language Arts / Art
22	The Good Life
	References
23	Books
27	Organizations
31	Internet
	Quiz
32	What is Affluenza?
36	Do you have it?

Bullfrog Films

PO Box 149, Oley PA 19547

Phone: (610) 779-8226 or (800) 543-3764

Fax: (610) 370-1978

Email: bullfrog@igc.org

Website: www.bullfrogfilms.com

LANGUAGE ARTS/SOCIAL STUDIES

WHAT IS AFFLUENZA?

OVERVIEW:

Students are introduced to “affluenza” and the symptoms of changing expectations for the American standard of living. Students will practice interviewing/ researching skills and report on their findings.

MATERIALS:

TV/VCR, a copy of the Affluenza video, and copy of the Family Interview worksheet.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 1958, only 4 percent of American homes had dishwashers. Now more than half do.

Less than 1 percent had color televisions. Now 97 percent do. In addition, in the '50s there were no microwave ovens, VCRs, or personal computers.

Today, many new homes have three-car garages and are nearly 900 square feet (the same as an entire house in the 1950s).

Americans fly 25 times as many passenger miles as they did in the 1950s.

Although Americans had fewer material goods, the number of Americans who say they are very happy peaked back in 1957.

Seventy percent of Americans visit malls each week, more than attend churches or synagogues. On average, Americans shop six hours a week and spend only 40 minutes playing with their children.

START video at the beginning: “Pew Charitable Trusts” logo (set the counter at 0).

STOP video when screen reads: “So what keeps us on the work-and-spend treadmill?” (about 6:03 on the counter)

ASK students:

- (1) When do you have money to spend? How do you earn the money you spend?
- (2) Do you prefer to spend your money right away?
- (3) What kinds of things would you save for?
- (4) Do you buy things only when you need them?
- (5) How do you differentiate between what you “want” and what you “need?”
- (6) Do you shop when you have to, or do you shop for other reasons?
- (7) Do you have time to yourself? How do you spend it?
- (8) How do you get to the places you want to go? How would you get there if you could?

INTERVIEW:

Tell students they will have an opportunity to interview their parents or other adults in their family about the types of products they had growing up and about how they spent their time. After students have conducted their interviews, discuss their findings as a class.

WRITING:

Ask students to write one to two pages about their family interviews on one of the following topics:

- (1)
Compare and contrast their attitudes about possessions and money with those held by their parents or grandparents.
- (2)
Ask students to explore how having greater or fewer material goods has affected their own family.

WORKSHEET

Family Interview

Use the following questions to interview a parent or other adult member of your family.

Did your family eat dinner together? How often? Did they eat other meals together?

What kinds of things did you do with your family?

Did your family have a color television, VCR, answering machine or personal computer? What kinds of electronic equipment did you have?

Did you share a bedroom or bathroom with a brother or sister?

Was the house you grew up in bigger or smaller than the home you live in now?

As a teenager, did you have a job? What did you do with the money you made?

Where did you go shopping? What did you buy?

How did you pay for things? Did you have a credit card?

Did you drive or own your own car?

What fashions were popular? Was it important to wear certain brand names?

COMMUNICATIONS, BUSINESS, ECONOMICS

ACTIVITY #1: WHAT ARE ADVERTISERS REALLY SELLING ?

OVERVIEW:

Students gain greater understanding of the underlying structures of advertising and marketing. They will search for hidden messages in advertising and the “hidden audience.”

MATERIALS:

TV/VCR, advertisements from magazines or television commercials for products of interest to youth. For health education, you may want to use ads for products such as alcohol and cigarettes.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

By the age of 20, the average American has seen one million commercial messages.

Advertising accounts for 2/3 of the space in newspapers, and 40 percent of our mail.

The average American spends one year of their lives watching TV commercials.

Children are the fastest growing segment of the consumer market. In 1995 alone, companies spent \$1 billion marketing their products to young people.

Each year advertisers spend millions of dollars trying to convince people to buy products. Most people don't know that advertising is not free to the buyers of products. This business expense is added to the cost of the product so that we pay more at the store. In fact, you are paying for products you don't buy!

There are other, less obvious ways we “pay” for advertising. Ads play on our feelings of envy and anxiety. Ads often suggest that a person could be more successful, attractive, even lovable if they use “Brand X.” People, both young and old, need tools to separate the message from the advertiser's intention to make a sale.

We are all cynical about the above, because it seems so obvious...but we are bombarded with advertising daily. If we hear something often enough, we start to believe it, and this can affect our self esteem. Sometimes when people don't feel good about themselves, they want to do a little "shopping therapy"— buying things because they think it will make them feel better. This is a symptom of Affluenza.

START video when screen reads: "So what keeps on the work and spend treadmill?" (about 6:03 on the counter)

STOP video when screen reads: "Empowered child?" (about 10:54)

ASK students to bring ads they think are targeted at them, or show them copies of magazine or television ads for products of interest to their age group, for example, cars, makeup, deodorant, tooth paste, jeans, tennis shoes, candy, fast food, alcohol or cigarettes.

DISCUSS the following questions:

- (1) How does the message make you feel?
- (2) What product is being advertised?
- (3) What are the advertisers trying to sell?
- (4) Note the body language of the people in the ad. What does the body language say?
- (5) Does the ad play on the emotion of envy or anxiety?
- (6) Who is the message intended for?
- (7) Does the ad "work?" Would you like to buy the product?

ASK students to list the ways in which products are marketed to young people.

WRITE about how students feel about marketing to young people. Or, choose a product and make a marketing plan for it.

ACTIVITY #2: WHO ARE ADVERTISERS SELLING TO?

OVERVIEW:

Students will explore how product producers, product distributors, advertisers and the public interact.

MATERIALS: TV/VCR.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Marketing companies are only interested in “market share”—what 1,000 people will buy as a group. Advertisers sell market shares of the “under 25” or “upper income,” etc. These markets are determined with surveys and focus groups.

As students will see in *Affluenza*, marketers are watching children shop, and going into their bedrooms to find out what kinds of products children like. In *Affluenza*, marketers say that using anti-social behavior to sell products to children is “a good thing.” They also speak of “capturing” and “owning” children, and that messages showing aggressive behavior are a good way to sell products to boys.

DISCUSS:

Most people think advertising is about selling products. In truth, advertising is about selling audiences to the advertiser, not selling products to the buyer. The system looks like this:

Product Producer

Distributor

Advertiser

The Public

The product producer interacts with the distributor, who also interacts with advertisers. The advertiser interacts with the distributor and the public. The product producer does not directly interact with the public and the public only interacts with the advertiser.

ASK students: Who do you think makes the most money from advertising? The product producer, the distributor or the advertiser?

Option for younger students—choose one or two products that the students use. Find examples of print and broadcast advertising that the students feel is aimed at them. How do they think advertisers decided that they would like to buy those products?

ACTIVITY #3: ADVERTISING IN SCHOOLS

OVERVIEW:

Students will become aware of advertising already in the schools and will work on critical thinking and debating skills.

MATERIALS: TV/VCR.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Advertising is moving into American schools in corporate-sponsored curriculum, in school buses and hallways, and during television programs shown in classrooms.

Some educators believe that accepting advertising benefits students. In exchange for showing Channel One, an in-school broadcast service that includes advertisements, schools get to use video equipment for free. Others feel that advertising will give schools additional funding. In Affluenza, the superintendent of a school district decides to accept advertising to increase school funding because voters haven't approved a levy in his district since 1972.

Others say schools should be ad-free zones. Requiring students to view advertising is unfair, they say, because students are a captive audience, and because advertising messages may get more credibility from the school setting. Students have been taught to trust what they learn in school, they say and they worry that advertising distracts from education.

START video when screen reads: "Empowered child?" (about 10:54 on the counter)

STOP video after this scene: "So it's a big deal? Yes!" (about 12:43)

DISCUSS the following questions and create a pro-and-con list on the board.

- (1) Where is advertising in school now?
 - (2) Do you think advertising belongs in schools?
 - (3) What about advertising that we wear to school, like logos?
 - (4) How could schools be funded?
 - (5) Where should the money that funds schools come from?
 - (6) Should there be some ad-free zones within your community?
- 9

WRITING:

Ask students write about whether or not advertising should be in schools.

DEBATE:

Divide students into teams and create a classroom debate. Ask one team to argue in favor of advertising in schools, and the other team against.

Option for younger students: ask them to create an advertisement that either promotes or speaks out against advertising in schools.

ACTIVITY #4: BE AN ADBUSTER !

OVERVIEW:

Students will have an opportunity to be an “adbuster” and to speak back at companies who make products that are unhealthy for young people, or who might make a fine product, but use questionable messages to sell the product.

MATERIALS:

TV/VCR, magazines (students could bring magazines from home), paste, scratch or colored paper, scissors and crayons, pens or paints.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In Affluenza, “Adbusters” use the energy and the message of an advertiser to express a very different point of view. They do this by using parody—taking an advertisement that is intended to be serious—and altering it to make fun of the product or the message.

START video at the Buy Nothing Day commercial: “...the Average North American consumes five times more than a Mexican, 10 times more than a Chinese person and 30 times more than a person from India...” (about 20:88 on the counter)

STOP video after this scene: “... I feel that we are at the early stages of a second American revolution to reconsider this consumption binge that we’ve been on for almost half a century now. It’s going somewhere along the line even the economists will come on board.” (about 22:12)

ASK students cut out advertisements of their own. (You may wish to limit the advertisements to products like alcohol or cigarettes.) Invite students to identify key messages in an advertisement, for example, that cool people drink beer, or that smoking makes a person more adventurous.

ASK students to consider the following common arguments of advertisers from the book, *Consuming Passions* by Ellen Mohr Catalano and Nina Sonenberg:

If you use this product you will...

- (1) Join a wonderful group of people.
- (2) Feel appreciated.
- (3) Be rewarded.
- (4) Be held in high esteem by others.
- (5) Will have more love or sexual gratification in your life.
- (6) Will enjoy the adventure or escape that you want.
- (7) Will be more like famous or wealthy people.
- (8) Will be associated with success, humor, tradition or modernity.
- (9) Will find deep satisfaction.

And, if you do not use this product you will ...

- (10) Face social isolation or career failure.
- (11) Face failing health or death.

ASK students to alter the advertisements so they say the opposite of what the advertiser intended. For example, an advertisement for “Cool Beer” could be made to say “Fool Beer,” or pictures intended to make smoking look adventurous could be altered to show people looking bored.

MATHEMATICS / ECONOMICS / LIFE SKILLS

CREDIT QUANDARIES

OVERVIEW: Students will learn how credit and credit cards work.

MATERIALS:

TV/VCR, copies of worksheet Credit Cards: The Fine Print and applications for different credit cards. Collect applications from local businesses, or search the Web for credit card applications.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Eleven percent of teenagers own their own credit cards and 40 percent use their parents' cards.

Americans have more than one billion credit cards.

Fewer than one-third of all Americans pay off their credit card balances each month. In fact, the average cardholder is \$2,700 in debt and is paying 16 percent interest.

More Americans declared bankruptcy in 1996 than graduated from college.

Arguments about money play a major role in 90 percent of divorce cases.

BEFORE VIEWING THE VIDEO, DISCUSS:

Credit cards are not “free money.” Nor are credit card companies doing people a favor when they give them credit. Credit cards are money-makers for the card companies because they must be paid off, and often the payments include high interest and other fees. These charges add up very quickly—credit purchases can cost buyers much more than cash purchases.

Credit card companies try to bring in new customers when they are 18 years old, and many offer cards to college students. Credit cards are so convenient to use that people forget they are paying finance charges. Sometimes it's easy to get more than one card, making it easier to get even deeper into debt.

If you decide to use credit, do so responsibly. Read the fine print and understand what charges you will have to pay!

START video when screen reads: “Symptom: A Rash of Bankruptcies.” (about 12:61 on the counter)

STOP video when screen reads: “Symptom: Social Scars.” (about 16:03)

ASK students:

- (1) What happens when people get so far into debt that they can't pay their bills?
- (2) The Adams family in *Affluenza* nearly got a divorce because of their debt. What could happen in families if bills can't be paid?
- (3) What are other ways children can be affected by their parents' debt?

REVIEW the following credit terms with students.

Annual Fee: The amount of money the lender charges per year for the use of their card. This is different than Annual Interest Rate. This amount is billed to you even if you do not charge anything on the card for that year.

Grace Period: The time in which you can pay off all new purchases without incurring finance charges. Typically, if you do not pay off your entire bill, all new purchases begin accruing finance charges immediately.

Late Fee: A penalty assessed if your monthly payment is made after the due date or Grace Period.

Over-the-Limit Fee: A penalty assessed if you exceed your maximum credit limit. Finance charges can sometimes put you over your limit without you even realizing it.

Cash Advance: These are charged when you receive cash against your credit line and are paid in addition to the interest rate. There is usually no grace period on cash advances.

Finance Charge: The cost of borrowing money. Usually this is a percentage of how much you borrow.

Minimum Payments: The minimum amount you are required to pay the issuer each month. By making only the minimum payment on the average credit card, a \$2,000 loan can take more than 11 years to repay. By that time, they buyer will have paid \$1,900 in interest!

MATH:

Split students into teams of two. Give each student a copy of the worksheet Credit Cards: The Fine Print.

One member of each team receives a credit card application, and the other team member an application for a different credit card.

Ask students to fill out the worksheet, and DISCUSS the results with the class.

Using information from the worksheet, test out the interest rates on the credit card applications:

- (1) What happens if you pay the minimum amount on a balance of \$2,000 for 10 months?
- (2) How long will it take to pay off a \$1,000 balance if you only pay the minimum amount each month?
- (3) How much would they have to pay each month to pay off \$1,000 in six months? In nine months?

Compare payments and fees. Which card would students rather use?

Activity courtesy of Consumer Credit Counselors of San Diego and Imperial Counties. CCC of San Diego has an excellent financial literacy curriculum. For more information, write: Consumer Credit Counselors of San Diego and Imperial Counties, 1550 Hotel Circle N., Suite 110, San Diego, CA 92108. phone: 619-497-0200.

WORKSHEET

Credit Cards: The Fine Print

Using a credit card application, fill in the following information.

Name of Lender:

Annual Fee:

Interest Rates: a. On transferred balance

b. On purchases

c. On cash advances

Computation of Variable Rate (if applicable):

Grace Period:

Late Fee:

Over-the-limit Fee:

Cash Advance Fee:

SOCIAL STUDIES / ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

ACTIVITY #1: POPCORN PARTY: WHAT THE REST OF THE WORLD CONSUMES

OVERVIEW:

Students will learn about how the world's resources are distributed among the world's people. Teachers might want to do this activity before viewing the video.

MATERIALS:

TV/VCR, popcorn with butter and salt, plain popcorn, some half-burned kernels, unpopped popcorn, soda pop, iced tea (decaffeinated recommended), water, cups and napkins. A video of people eating (Babette's Feast? Like Water for Chocolate?)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The gap between rich and poor Americans is now the widest of any industrial nation.

One-fifth of the world's population lives in dire poverty, slowly dying of hunger and disease. Millions of others desperately need more material goods. Yet, were they to consume as Americans do, the result would be an environmental disaster.

Americans throw away 7 million cars a year, 2 million plastic bottles every hour and enough aluminum cans annually to make 6,000 DC-10 airliners.

START video when screen reads: "Symptom: Social Scars." (about 16:03 on the counter)

STOP video after this scene: "Affluenza, the disease of consumerism, is spreading around the world... so it's really critical that we here in North America begin to alter our patterns of consumption and set a better example for the rest of the world of what the good life really is, or none of us are going to have a good life." (about 18:57)

REVIEW the following definitions with students:

The United Nations divides the world into the First, Second and Third Worlds.

First World countries are wealthier nations that consume most of the world's resources—for instance, the U.S., Canada, United Kingdom and France. Economic systems are based on capitalism/free enterprise and the nations are highly industrialized. Families in these countries tend to be small and money, status and performing tasks with great speed is valued. Although these countries are rich, a significant portion of the population is still very poor.

Second World countries are less wealthy. They consume fewer goods, and have a moderate standard of living. These countries—for instance, Russia, China and Poland—have economies that have been influenced by socialism. Industry in these countries is rapidly developing, and families tend to be small.

Third World countries—for instance, Mexico, Thailand, Indonesia and Uganda—are extremely poor. Poverty and hunger are common, families are larger and many children do not survive to adulthood. (Large families mean more workers who can help the family to survive.)

Fourth and Fifth Worlds are people that depend on nature for survival—for instance, hunter and gatherer societies.

Divide students into unequal First, Second and Third World groups.

(Twenty-five students might be divided into four students in the First World group, seven students in the Second World group and fourteen students in the Third World group.)

(Option: there could also be a Fourth/Fifth World group with a single student.)

Give members of First World a really big bag of popcorn with butter and salt, and a two sodas each to drink. (Don't eat or drink yet!)

The Second World students receive a smaller bag of plain popcorn and some iced tea without sugar. (Don't eat or drink yet!)

The Third World students get a few kernels of popped corn, some burned, half-popped kernels and some unpopped kernels and water. (Don't eat or drink yet!)

(Option: if there is a Fourth/Fifth World Group, they receive unpopped popcorn only.)

After the popcorn has been distributed, ask students if they want to change places.

(The First World students may travel freely. The Second World students must decide on a specific destination—and they may not be able to return home. The Third World students are too poor to travel. The Fourth/Fifth World students don't have a way to travel outside their homeland.)

ASK students how to divide up the popcorn for the members of their group.

(Students may decide to divide up the popcorn among all the students. Teachers might ask the students to divide the popcorn among the members of each group only. Some students might have already eaten their popcorn.)

After students have divided up the popcorn, they may eat it.

DISCUSS:

Did students in the First World have any leftover popcorn? Did they eat it right away? Did they share? Did they spill popcorn or waste soda?

How did students decide to divide up their resources? Did anyone with extra popcorn offer to share theirs with a member of the Second or Third World?

How did the Third World members feel watching the others enjoy their popcorn? Did any of them see parallels with real life? (People in the Third World have seen the same commercials for products, and they want the same goods that people in the First World have.)

If you played a video of people eating, ask students if they noticed it, and if they did, how it made them feel.

ACTIVITY #2: A SMALL WORLD

OVERVIEW: Students will learn about the world's finite resources, and consider the impact of the American lifestyle on the environment.

MATERIALS: An apple and a plastic knife for each student.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In Mexico, more than 60 percent of the land is severely degraded, and soil erosion leaves 100,000 square miles of grazing and cropland unproductive each year.

According to figures from the Natural Heritage Institute in San Francisco, unsustainable farming practices—and increasingly, desertification caused by climate change—drive 900,000 people off the land each year.

Slice the apple into quarters. Set aside three of the quarters to represent the oceans of the world.

ASK: What fraction do they have left? (one quarter) The quarter of the apple represents the land of the Earth.

Slice the quarter in half. Set aside one half to represent land inhospitable to people: polar areas, deserts, swamps, very high or rocky mountains.

ASK: What fraction is left? (one eighth) The one-eighth of the land represents where people live but not necessarily where the food is grown.

Slice this piece into four sections and set aside three of the four sections. The three sections represent areas too cold, wet, rocky steep or with soil too poor to produce food. The remaining portion contains cities, towns, suburbs, highways, shopping centers, schools, parks, factories, parking lots and other places where people live but do not grow food.

Carefully peel the remaining slice. This represents the soil surface on which humankind depends. It is less than five feet deep—a fixed amount of food-producing land. This fixed land is all that is available for the increasing number of people and other living things that rely on the land for food. The Earth's population is now 5.8 billion people. In the next century that number is expected to rise to some 8 to 14 billion people.

DISCUSS what it means to have finite resources. Compare this small fraction of arable land with the effect that humans have on the Earth as a whole.

ACTIVITY #3: A HISTORY OF WANTING MORE

OVERVIEW:

Students will understand how Americans began to consume and waste so much, and the impact the purchase of product has on the environment.

MATERIALS:

TV/VCR, a copy of the worksheet, The Impact of Stuff.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the 1800s, the word “consumption” meant to exhaust, pillage, or destroy. Even in the early 1900s, the disease tuberculosis was known as consumption.

Families were encouraged to buy a new car every year, not because the cars don’t work anymore, but because they go out of style. This is known as “planned obsolescence.”

Not long ago, some experts predicted that by the year 2000, Americans would only work 14 hours a week. Labor-saving devices were supposed to make this possible. Instead, business executives feared a lag in consumer demand. They worried that the economy would come crashing down, and looked for new ways to stimulate spending.

START video at this scene: “According to historian David Shi, the idea that the good life is a simpler, less acquisitive life, runs deep in our heritage...” (about 18:58 on the counter)

STOP video when screen reads: “Prevention and Treatment.” (about 20:75)

ASK students to select a product such as designer athletic shoes, TV, VCR or car. Have students research what resources go into the product. (A good resource for this activity is the book *Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things* by John C. Ryan and Alan Thein Durning.)

Give each student a copy of the Impact of Stuff worksheet and have them research the answers to the questions.

DISCUSS student findings.

For more information about the history of American consumption, please see our history timeline, “Consuming Moments in History” on our Affluenza Web site at www.pbs.org/affluenza.

WORKSHEET

The Impact of Stuff

Choose a common product, then research and answer the following questions.

Name the item.

What resources were used to create the product.

Are the resources renewable or nonrenewable?

Who makes the product and where?

Is it likely that the workers who build the product, may also own the product?

Who buys the product, and what do the buyers have to be willing to do to buy the product (work more, save less, buy on credit)?

Is the product easy or difficult to repair?

What happens to the product at the end of its life?

What is the environmental impact of the product?

LANGUAGE ARTS / ART

THE GOOD LIFE

OVERVIEW:

Students will explore what non-material and material goods are important for a “good life.”

MATERIALS:

TV/VCR, magazines with pictures (or have students bring magazines from home) paper, scissors, paste.

START video at this scene: “I feel that we are at the early stages of a second American revolution to reconsider this consumption binge that we’ve been on for almost half a century now. It’s going somewhere along the line even the economists will come on board.” (about 22:12 on the counter)

STOP video: At the credits at the end of tape.

ASK students to define a “good life.” Make a list of the material and non-material things they believe are necessary to have a “good life.”

WRITING:

Have students choose either the material or non-material necessities and write about what is important for them to have a “good life.”

ART:

Illustrate the “good life” by making a collage with pictures and words from magazines. Option: Illustrate what is not the student’s idea of the “good life.”

REFERENCES

One of the most enjoyable benefits of making AFFLUENZA was the opportunity to read a lot of fascinating material, including far too many books, periodicals and newspaper articles to cite here. Listed below are many of the books, periodicals, organizations and internet resources we found most helpful. Happy reading!

Books & Periodicals

The American Economy. Herbert Stein and Murray Foss. Washington, D.C. American Enterprise Institute Press, 1995. An easy-to-read (with great graphics) look at 100 key aspects of the American economy by two leading conservative economists.

Beyond The Limits. Donella Meadows, Dennis Meadows and Jorgen Randers. Post Mills, Vermont. Chelsea Green Publishing, 1992. Through computer models, this book explains that our present high-consumption lifestyle will lead to a global collapse within the lifetime of our grandchildren. The good news is that we can create a permanently sustainable global economy that could offer everyone on Earth a lifestyle as comfortable as the average in Europe in 1990.

Biosphere Politics. Jeremy Rifkin. New York. Crown Publishers, 1991. One of America's most holistic and creative thinkers examines the environmental threats inherent in over-consumption and suggests strategies for a transition to sustainability.

Circle of Simplicity. Cecile Andrews. New York. HarperCollins, 1997. A leader of the voluntary simplicity movement shows how study circles can help citizens simplify their lives and find community. A thorough critique of consumer society.

The Consumer Society. Edited by Neva Goodwin, Frank Ackerman and David Kiron. Washington, D.C. Island Press, 1997. This is a fine collection of scholarly essays on all aspects of consumerism. Probably the best, most comprehensive introduction to the issue available. Includes a mix of current and historical material.

Down-Shifting. Amy Saltzman. New York. HarperCollins, 1990. Fascinating stories of many Americans who have opted for a slower, simpler life.

Giving Kids The Business. Alex Molnar. Boulder, Colorado. Westview Press, 1996. Molnar, a University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee educator, takes a close look at how corporate marketers are invading American schools and targeting children.

The Golden Ghetto. Jessie H. O'Neill. Center City, Minnesota. Hazelden, 1997. A fascinating look at the psychology of affluence and affluence's negative impacts on the lives of wealthy Americans. Written by the granddaughter of the former General Motors CEO. An excellent analysis of our addiction to wealth.

The Harried Leisure Class. Staffan Linder. New York. Columbia University Press, 1970. A book that is becoming a classic. Linder shows how increasing affluence produces time scarcity and a stressful life.

How Much Is Enough. Alan Durning. New York. Norton, 1992. A meticulously researched look at how much we consume and why it isn't making us happier. Already something of a classic. We also recommend Durning's other books, *This Place on Earth* and *Stuff: The Everyday Life of Material Things*. Durning shows just what resources it takes to make our lifestyle possible.

Kids As Customers. James McNeal. New York. Lexington Books, 1992. An unabashedly favorable guide to marketing to children, with a special focus on "children as global consumers." This book is an excellent presentation of the marketers' side of the story.

Margin. Richard Swenson. Colorado Springs, Colorado. Navpress, 1992. A family doctor and devout Christian discovers that much of his patients' pain is a direct result of the pressures of modern society and what he calls "possession overload." Swenson not only diagnoses the disease, he shows how to treat it. This book deserves much more visibility than it has so far received.

Marketing Madness. Michael Jacobson and Laurie Mazur. Boulder, Colorado. Westview Press, 1995. Shows how advertising and other marketing strategies are invading every aspect of American life. Plenty of excellent illustrations.

Material World. Peter Menzel. San Francisco. Sierra Club Books, 1994. Menzel photographs the possessions of average families in countries throughout the world, showing in stunningly powerful pictures the abyss between the rich and poor in today's world.

The Overworked American. Juliet Schor. New York. Basic Books, 1993. In this excellent best-seller, Harvard economist Schor demonstrates that Americans are working longer hours today than they did a generation ago, as they've become caught in a "work and spend cycle."

The Politics of Rich and Poor. Kevin Philips. New York. Random House, 1990. Former Nixon adviser Philips examines the reasons that the United States has dropped to dead last among industrial nations in the fairness of its income distribution.

The Poverty of Affluence. Paul Wachtel. Philadelphia. New Society Publishers, 1989. Wachtel, chairman of the Clinical Psychology Graduate Program at the City College of New York, examines the price we pay for our obsession with economic growth and demonstrates why consuming more doesn't make us happier. A thorough look at the psychological dimensions of affluenza.

A Reasonable Life. Ferenc Mate. New York. Norton, 1993. A biting humorous look at modern consumer society with suggestions for a simpler, saner life.

Satisfaction Guaranteed. Susan Strasser. New York. Pantheon Books, 1989. A historian tracks the development of the consumer lifestyle. Well researched and eminently readable.

The Search for Meaning. Thomas Naylor, William Willimon and Magdalena Naylor. Nashville. Abingdon Press, 1994. Shows why the American consumer lifestyle leaves us without a sense of meaning and purpose in our lives and how we can find meaning.

The Simple Life. David Shi. New York. Oxford University Press, 1985. A history of simple living movements in the United States by the President of Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina. First-rate scholarship and writing. Fascinating from start to finish.

The Simple Living Guide. Janet Luhrs. New York. Broadway Books, 1997. An excellent sourcebook for less stressful, more joyful living. Has sections on how to find more fulfillment in money, work, family and celebrations, as well as how to find cheaper housing and cut the clutter out of life.

Simple Living. Frank Levering and Wanda Urbanska. New York. Penguin, 1992. Reads like a good novel. The story of one couple's search for a simpler, less acquisitive way of life as

they abandon the fast lane in Los Angeles to take over a failing family orchard in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Honest writing about the pitfalls and pleasures of voluntary simplicity. Hard to put down.

Steady State Economics. Herman Daly. Washington, D.C. Island Press, 1991. The former World Bank economist shows how it is possible to maintain a healthy economy without constant economic growth. A classic-to-be.

The Tightwad Gazette. Amy Daczyn. New York. Villard, 1996. Three volumes of helpful tips for anyone interested in living more frugally.

Trends 2000. Gerald Celente. New York. Warner, 1997. A careful look at emerging trends by one of the best trend-trackers in the business. Celente, director of the Trends Research Institute in Rhinebeck, New York, sees voluntary simplicity as one of the top 10 trends of the 1990s, and one which is growing in popularity all over the world.

Voluntary Simplicity. Duane Elgin. New York. Morrow, 1981. The classic on the subject. Elgin examines 1970s efforts toward simpler lifestyles and shows what it takes to succeed. Still highly relevant today.

When Corporations Rule the World. David Korten. West Hartford, Connecticut. Kumarian Press, 1995. A development expert and former Harvard Business School professor comes to realize that expansion of the American consumer lifestyle throughout the world threatens the environment and local cultures, and widens the gap between rich and poor. Shows how affluenza is becoming a global disease.

Whole Life Economics. Barbara Brandt. Philadelphia. New Society Publishers, 1995. An alternative paradigm to the consumer society. Good ideas for making the economy more friendly to people and the environment.

Work Without End. Benjamin Hunnicutt. Philadelphia. Temple University Press, 1988. A scholarly look at how the gospel of consumption replaced demands for shorter working hours as the American economy grew.

Your Money Or Your Life. Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robin. New York. Penguin Books, 1992. Shows readers how to take control of their lives by learning frugality, and how to help

make the Earth a better place at the same time. Another classic-to-be, this book is becoming a best-seller worldwide and has been translated into several languages.

Organizations

Center for a New American Dream
(www.newdream.org/index.html)

156 College Street

2nd Floor

Burlington, VT 05401

802-862-6762

e-mail: anewdream@aol.com

A new organization created to promote national efforts to turn away from consumerism. Has a Web site that provides a truly excellent list of resources and organizations and Web links to other sites of interest.

The Co-Housing Network

(www.cohousing.org)

P.O. Box 2584

Berkley, CA 94702

A national clearinghouse of good ideas for co-housing.

Consumer Credit Counseling Service. Offices in most major cities. Provides helpful counseling for people with debt problems and, in San Diego, has developed an excellent school curriculum on wise use of money and credit. For more information on the financial literacy curriculum for preschool through high school students, contact Consumer Credit Counselors of San Diego and Imperial Counties, 1550 Hotel Circle N., Suite 110, San Diego, CA 92108. phone: 619-497-0200. Web address: <http://www.cccs-sandiego.org>

Context Institute

(www.context.org)

P.O. Box 946

Langley, WA 98260

360-221-6044

e-mail: incontext@igc.apc.org

Publishes In Context, an online magazine devoted to sustainability.

Earth Ministry
1305 NE 47th
Seattle, WA 98105
206-632-2426

Has an excellent curriculum/study guide, *Simplicity as Compassion*, for use with church groups. Special focus on sustainable consumption.

Focus on the Family
P.O. Box 3550
Colorado Springs, CO 80935-3350
719-531-5181

The largest conservative Christian organization in the U.S. Some leaders in this organization have expressed concerns about the problem of materialism in American culture and its effects on families.

Foundation on Economic Trends
1660 L Street N.W.
Suite 216
Washington, D.C. 20036
Examines the ethical, economic and social implications of emerging technologies.

Global Action Plan
P.O. Box 428
Woodstock, NY 12498
914-679-4830
e-mail: gapusa@igc.org
Trains household eco-teams to dramatically reduce waste and encourages businesses to cut back on wasteful packaging. Good materials for schoolchildren. Begun in the United States, GAP is now active in many countries worldwide. Check out the organization's EcoTeam Home Page (www.halcyon.com/smenzel/ecoteam)

National Religious Partnership for the Environment
(www.nrpe.org)
1047 Amsterdam Avenue
New York, NY 10025
212-316-7441
e-mail: nrpe@aol.com
Includes representatives from Catholic, mainstream Protestant, Evangelical and Jewish churches and has an active task force on consumption.

Northwest Earth Institute
921 S.W. Morrison Street
Portland, OR 97205
503-227-2807
Has excellent Voluntary Simplicity curriculum for
study groups in workplaces.

Northwest Environment Watch
(www.northwestwatch.org)
1402 Third Avenue, Suite 1127
Seattle, WA 98101-2118
206-447-1880
e-mail: nwwatch@igc.apc.org
A not-for-profit research center that works to
foster a sustainable economy and way of life in the
Pacific Northwest. A good source of information
about the impact of overconsumption.

New Road Map Foundation
(<http://www.sl.net.com/cip/nrm/>)
5557 38th Avenue N.E.
Seattle, WA 98105
Founded by Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robin, authors
of *Your Money or Your Life*. Provides excellent
informational pamphlets about the impact of
over-consumption and study guides for use with *Your
Money or Your Life*.

Positive Futures Network
(www.futurenet.org)
P.O. Box 10818
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110
206-842-0216
e-mail: yes@futurenet.org
Publisher of *Yes! A Journal Of Positive Futures*.
David Korten, featured in *Affluenza*, chairs the
board of this organization.

The Media Foundation
1243 West 7th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C V6H 1B7
Canada
604-736-9401
e-mail: adbuster@wimsey.com
Produces *Adbusters Quarterly* magazine and
television uncommercials. Helps local communities
get "uncommercials" on TV.

Redefining Progress
One Kearny Street
Fourth Floor
San Francisco, CA 94108
415-781-1191

The Simple Living Network
(<http://www.slnet.com/>)
A source for books and tapes and other information
about voluntary simplicity.

Unplug
360 Grand Avenue
Box 385
Oakland, CA 94610
1-800-UNPLUG-1
e-mail: peacenet.unplug@igc.org
Helps local communities and parent-teacher groups
resist commercialism in the classroom.

World Vision
Institute For Global Engagement
P.O. Box 9716
Federal Way, WA 98063-9716
1-888-552-1508
e-mail: ige@mail.wvus.org
The world's largest Christian relief and development
organization. Offers excellent study
guide and video, "Live Simply That Others May
Simply Live," about overconsumption and its impact.

Worldwatch Institute
(www.worldwatch.org)
1776 Massachusetts Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C 20036-1904
202-452-1999
e-mail: worldwatch@worldwatch.org
Publishes annual State of the World Report.
Excellent statistical information.

Internet Resources

Web Sites

Center for Sustainable Communities

<http://weber.u.washington.edu/~common/>

Earth Island

<http://www.earthisland.org/ei>

Overcoming Consumerism

<http://www.hooked.net/users/verdant/index.htm>

Pew Global Stewardship Network

<http://www.mbnet.mb.ca:80/linkages/gsn/index.html>

Pierce Simplicity Study

<http://www.mbay.net/~pierce/>

The E.F. Schumacher Society

<http://members.aol.com/efssociety/index.html>

Voluntary Simplicity and Financial Independence

<http://www.scn.org/earth/lightly/>

Welcome to GANE (General Agreement on a New Economy)

<http://www.igc.apc.org/econwg/gane/>

Tightwad Gazette Fan Club

<http://users.aol.com/maryfou/tightwad.html>

Mailing Lists

Maxlife

listserv@gibbs.oit.unc.edu

Positive Futures

majordomo@power.nt (text:subscribe incontext)

Newsgroups

[alt.recover.clutter](#)

[alt.consumers.experiences](#)

[alt.consumers.free-stuff](#)

[alt.culture.openair-market](#)

[alt.co-ops](#)

[alt.coupons](#)

[rec.food.cooking](#)

[rec.food.veg.cooking](#)

[rec.food.recipes](#)

[rec.food.preserving](#)

[alt.creative-cooking](#)

[rec.crafts.brewing](#)

[rec.crafts.winemaking](#)

QUIZ

WHAT IS AFFLUENZA?

1. Which of the following is comparable to the size of a typical three-car garage?

- a. a basketball court
- b. a McDonald's restaurant
- c. an "RV" (recreational vehicle)
- d. the average home in the 1950s.

Answer: d. Many of today's three-car garages occupy 900 square feet, just about the average size of an entire home in the 1950s. Many people use the extra garage space to store things they own and seldom use. Often we hear that Americans have lost ground economically and have less purchasing power. But Americans are buying more luxurious items, partly by working more and going deeply into debt. The homes they live in and the cars they drive today are often bigger and more technologically advanced than those purchased by their parents.

2. The percentage of Americans calling themselves "very happy" reached its highest point in what year?

- a. 1957
- b. 1967
- c. 1977
- d. 1987

Answer: a. The number of "very happy" people peaked in 1957, and has remained fairly stable or declined ever since. Even though we consume twice as much as we did in the 1950s, people were just as happy when they had less.

3. How much of an average American's lifetime will be spent (on average) watching television commercials?

- a. 6 months
- b. 3 months
- c. 1 year
- d. 1.5 years

Answer: c. In contrast, Americans on average spend only 40 minutes a week playing with their children, and members of working couples talk with one another on average only 12 minutes a day.

4. True or false? Americans carry \$1 billion in personal debt, not including real estate and mortgages.

Answer: False. Americans carry \$1 trillion in personal debt, approximately \$4,000 for every man, woman and child, not including real estate and mortgages. On average, Americans save only 4 percent of their income, in contrast to the Japanese, who save an average of 16 percent.

5. Which activity did more Americans do in 1996?

- a. graduate from college
- b. declare bankruptcy

Answer: b. In 1996, more than 1 million Americans declared bankruptcy, three times as many as in 1986. Americans have more than 1 billion credit cards, and less than one-third of credit card holders pay off their balances each month.

6. In the industrialized world, where is the U.S. ranked in terms of its income equality between the rich and the poor? (First being the most income-equal.)

- a. 1st
- b. 5th
- c. 12th
- d. 22nd

Answer: d. The income disparity between the rich and the poor is greatest in the United States.

7. The world's 358 billionaires together possess as much money as the poorest _____ of the world's population?

- a. 15 percent
- b. 30 percent
- c. 50 percent
- d. 10 percent

Answer: c. Nearly 50 percent. The world's 358 billionaires' combined assets roughly equal the assets of the world's poorest 2.5 billion people.

8. Since 1950, Americans alone have used more resources than:

- a. everyone who ever lived before them
- b. the combined Third World populations
- c. the Romans at the height of the Roman Empire
- d. all of the above

Answer: All of the above. Since 1950, Americans alone have used more resources than everyone who ever lived before them. Each American individual uses up 20 tons of basic raw materials annually. Americans throw away 7 million cars a year, 2 million plastic bottles an hour and enough aluminum cans annually to make six thousand DC-10 airplanes.

9. Americans' total yearly waste would fill a convoy of garbage trucks long enough to:

- a. wrap around the Earth six times
- b. reach half-way to the moon
- c. connect the North and South Poles
- d. build a bridge between North America and China

Answer: a. and b. Even though Americans comprise only five percent of the world's population, in 1996 we used nearly a third of its resources and produced almost half of its hazardous waste. The average North American consumes five times as much as an average Mexican, 10 times as much as an average Chinese and 30 times as much as the average person in India.

10. Which president feared that untamed American capitalism might create a corrupt civilization?

- a. Jimmy Carter
- b. Ronald Reagan
- c. Theodore Roosevelt
- d. Abraham Lincoln

Answer: c. President Theodore Roosevelt feared that allowing American capitalism to develop unleashed would eventually create a corrupt civilization. He was a strong proponent of simple living.

11. Which economic indicator counts pollution three times as a sign of a growing economy?

- a. the GDP (Gross Domestic Product)
- b. the GPI (Genuine Progress Indicator)

Answer: a. The GDP counts pollution three times: first when it is made, second when it is cleaned up and third when health-care professionals treat pollution-related health problems. An organization called Redefining Progress developed an alternative economic progress measurement, the GPI (Genuine Progress Indicator). GPI takes into account 24 aspects of economic life that the standard GDP (Gross Domestic Product) ignores. The GPI adds value for such activities as housework and volunteerism, and subtracts for the costs of such problems as crime, car accidents and family breakdown.

12. Of the Americans who voluntarily cut back their consumption, what percent said (in 1995) that they are happier as a result?

- a. 29 percent
- b. 42 percent
- c. 67 percent
- d. 86 percent

Answer: d. Eighty-six percent of Americans who voluntarily cut back their consumption feel happier as a result. Only 9 percent said they were less happy. In 1996, 5 percent of the "baby boom" generation reported practicing a strong form of voluntary simplicity. By the year 2000, some predict this number will rise to 15 percent.

AFFLUENZA - Do You Have it?

Diagnose yourself using the key below.

1. I'm willing to pay more for a t-shirt if it has a cool corporate logo on it.
2. I believe that if I buy the cocktail dress, the cocktail party will come.
3. I have a shoe collection Imelda Marcos would envy.
4. When I'm cold, I take my clothes off and turn up the heat.
5. I'm willing to work 40 years at a job I hate so I can buy lots of stuff.
6. When I'm feeling blue, I like to go shopping and treat myself.
7. I want a sports utility vehicle, although I rarely drive in conditions that warrant one.
8. I usually make just the minimum payment on my credit cards.
9. I believe that whoever dies with the most toys wins.
10. Most of the things my friends/family and I enjoy doing together are free.
11. I don't measure my self-worth (or that of others) by what I own.
12. I know how to pinch a dollar until it screams.
13. I worry about the effects of advertising on children.
14. To get to work, I carpool, ride my bike or use public transportation.
15. I'd rather be shopping right now.

For questions 1-9 and 15, give yourself 2 points for true and 1 point for false.
For questions 10-14, give yourself 0 points for true and 2 points for false.

If you scored:

10-15 No dangerous signs of Affluenza at this time.
Watch Affluenza to help build immunity.

16-22 Warning: You have mild Affluenza. Watch Affluenza to help prevent a full-blown case, and see our handy tips for squishing the Affluenza bug.

23-30 Cut up your credit cards and call a doctor!

Watch Affluenza, and then watch it again.