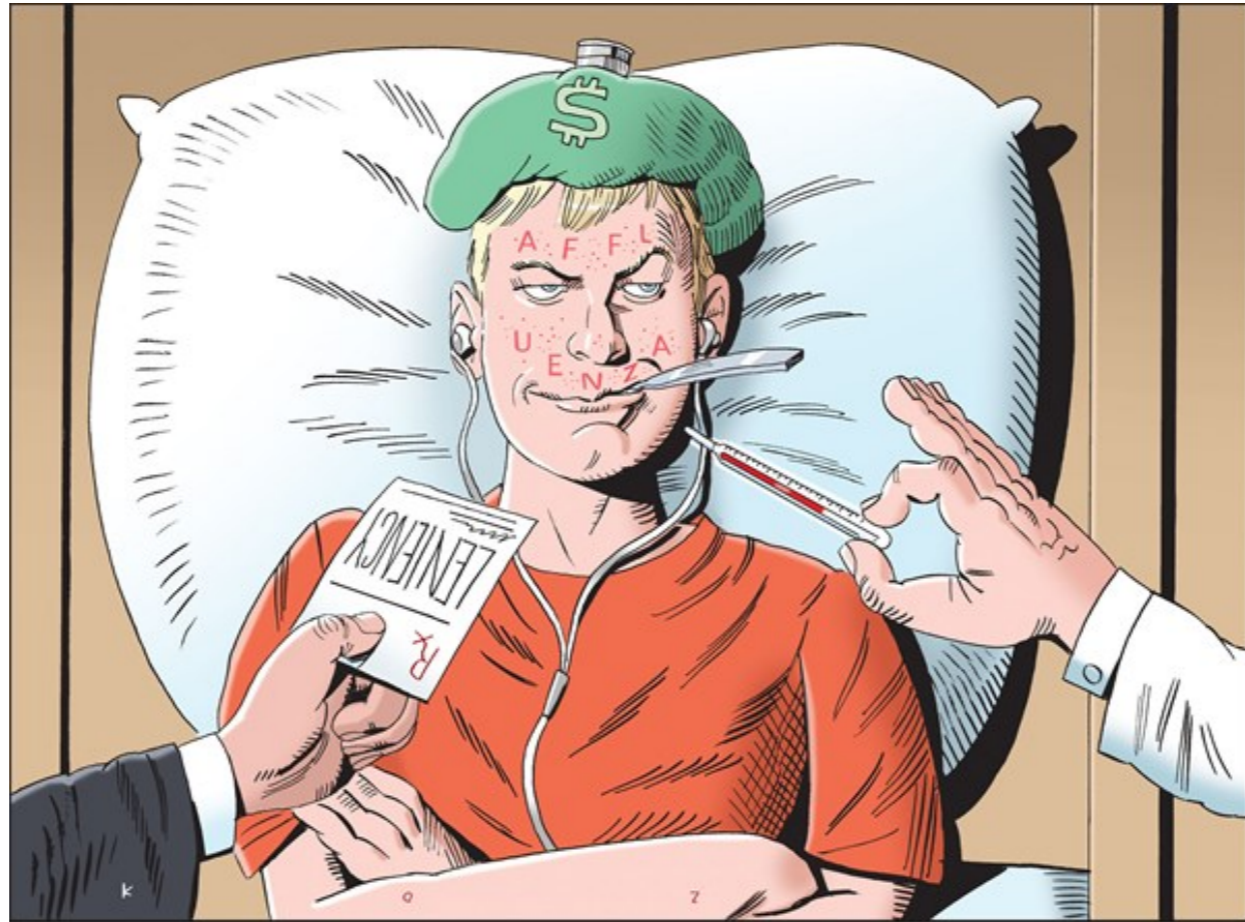




December 1, 2015
General Meeting

Affluence and Affluenza: The Challenges of Work Hard - Play Hard



*A Culture of
Acceptable Losses?*





Affluenza I: Accountability Exempt

af-flu-enza

/ˈ af.FLU.enza

noun

*a get-out-of-jail-free card for the rich, famous,
and anyone who can afford a high powered lawyer.*



Ethan Couch



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NORM
The Miami Herald

The Context of “*Accountability Exempt*”

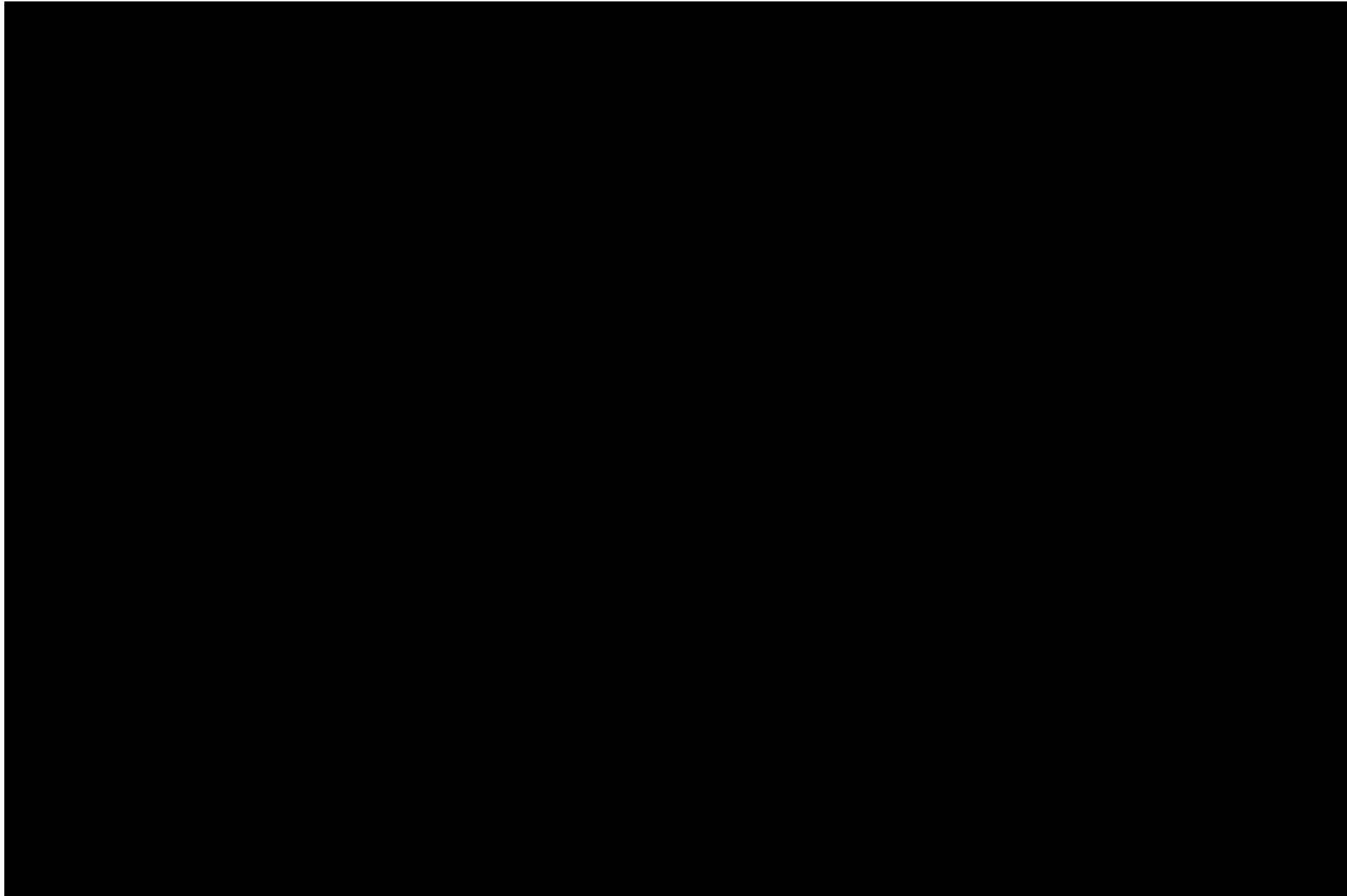
Children from affluent homes do not tend to start showing higher rates of problems until the “tween” years:

- ❖ Minimal (or erratic) supervision and guidance
- ❖ Minimal connections to surrounding community
- ❖ Risky behaviors viewed as “justifiable under pressure” (work hard, play hard)
- ❖ Attitude of “entitlement”
- ❖ Access to money and desirable stuff: **currency of exchange** for social fit
- ❖ Increased pressures to excel without adequate supports: academics and sports
 - Children become “yardstick” for parent’s social self-esteem
 - Inadequate emphasis on character
- ❖ Expectations of achievement without regard for individuality
 - Health minimized: stigma- **if you can’t handle it, you’re a loser**
 - Help seeking behavior delayed or avoided
- ❖ Expectations of achievement w/o regard for ethics
- ❖ Service to others often framed as resume padding
- ❖ Diminished capacity for compassion and empathy
- ❖ Culture of anticipated cruelty

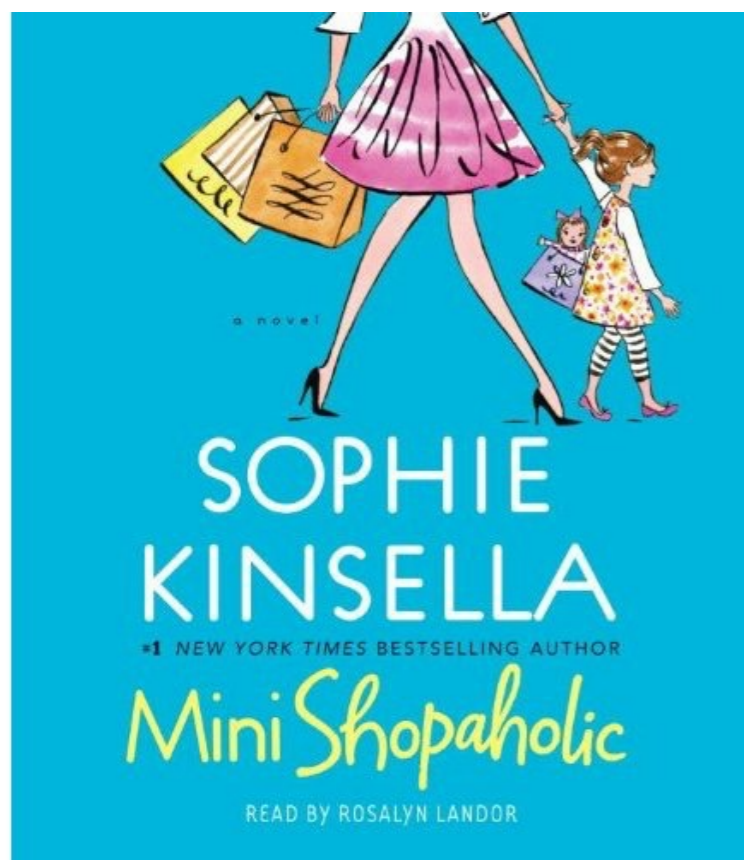


Affluenza II: Material Indulgence as Surrogate for Connection

The Customer is King



Affluenza is a cultural context in which **material possessions serve as surrogates** for emotional intimacies and social accountabilities and as the primary basis for self-esteem— empowerment through short-term gratification. Money buys happiness and well being:
too much is never enough.



BUYING CLOTHES
ISN'T JUST
BUYING CLOTHES
IT'S BUYING

HAPPINESS
WWW.AFFLUENZA.COM





Family Management Pitfalls of Affluenza

Parenting too often involves **indulgence**:

Fueled by guilt or anxiety due to absence-

“We don’t want to see our children struggle....”

“It’s easier to do it myself....”

“It’s not worth the fight....”

***Keeping up with the Joneses has become “default mechanism” for *anticipating* community status.....**

***Hard for parents who subscribe to this philosophy to separate it from their parenting. Children become part of the “metrics” of parental/family self-esteem.**



“Affluenzic” Youth Development

1. \$\$\$- In 1984 children ages four to twelve spent \$4 billion of their own money. By 2005, they spent \$35 billion.
2. \$\$\$- From 1980 to 2004 the amount of money spent on children’s advertising rose from \$150 million to \$15 billion (15,000 %). 40,000 commercials per year, @ 110 per day.
3. Kid Power '96, Paul Kurnit, prominent marketing consultant, “Antisocial behavior in pursuit of a product is a good thing.” Kurnit urged advertisers to reach children by encouraging rude, often aggressive behavior and “faux” rebellion against family discipline.
4. The average twelve-year old spends 48 hours per week exposed to commercial messages but only about 40 minutes per week in meaningful conversation with their parents and less than 30 minutes per week in structured time outdoors.
5. 1995 poll found that 95% of American adults worry that our children are becoming “too focused on buying and consuming things” and 66% say their own children measure their self-worth by their possessions and are “spoiled”.
6. 1982 to 2009 use of Narcissistic Personality Inventory: 30% increase in self-centeredness among students and more than 2/3 now scoring above 1982 averages. *“There is no other example in empirical psychology research of personality changing as rapidly and dramatically.”*





James Kuntsler, *The Geography of Nowhere*,

“We’ve mutated from citizens to consumers in the last 60 years... The trouble with ... consumers is that they have no duties or responsibilities to their fellow consumers. *Citizens do*. They have the obligation to care about their fellow citizens and about the integrity of the town’s environment and history.”

Culture of Busyness

“Busyness” has become a virtue: a symbol of importance and success

“Good Neighbors” leave each other alone and prioritize quiet and keep up appearances

“Socializing” viewed as diversion rather than as a set of activities essential to our well being

“Nagging” has developed as a means of keeping families on track

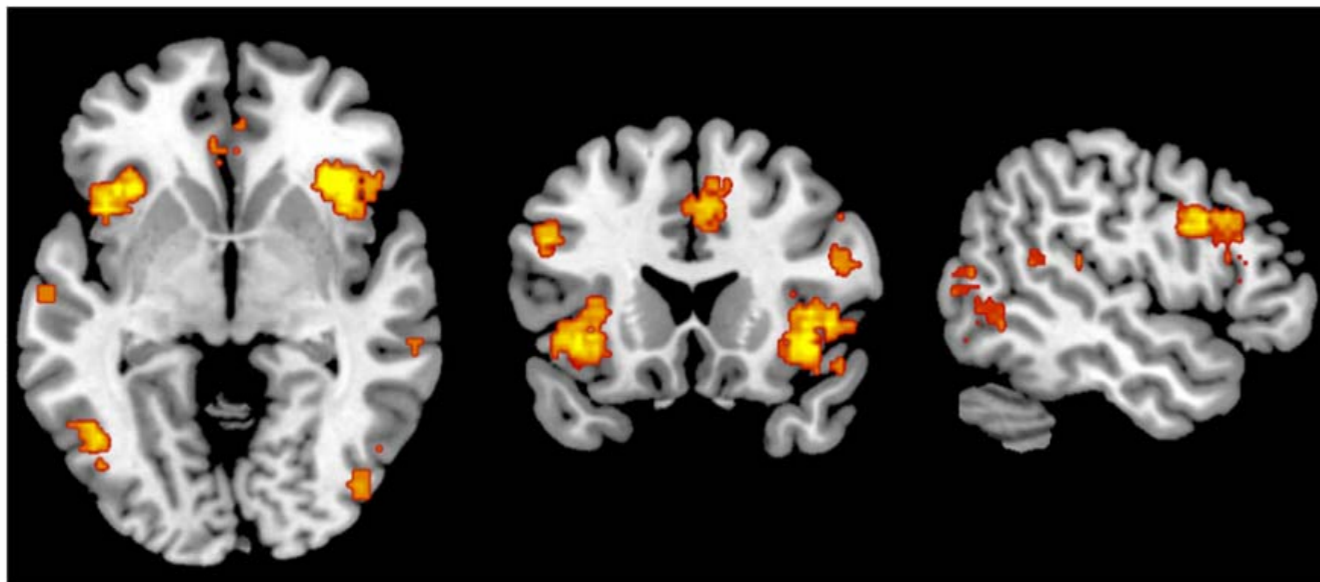
“Frantic without a Peep” harried, but not a “peep” of complaint

“F.O.M.O.” *Fear of Missing Out*- over scheduled

“Competitive Tensions” within and between families- children become yardsticks for parental self-esteem

“Nothing is Ever Good Enough”- there is always someone doing more or better

Saliency and Sham Reward: the capacity of objects, people or contexts to become “triggers” for desire, and possibly action, due to “hijacking” established neurological networks-
reinforcing or addictive qualities.





Affluenza III: A Context in Which Individual, Family and Community Health Fails

Affluenza: a painful, contagious, socially transmitted condition of overload, debt, anxiety and waste resulting from the dogged pursuit of more.

Affluenza is rooted in the idea that every generation will be materially wealthier than its predecessor and that, somehow, we can pursue that single-minded end without damaging the countless other priorities we hold dear.

Somehow, we can have it all!



Over-riding priority of material gain comes at high prices:

1. By 1991, American workers worked 160 hours (4 weeks) more than they did in 1969
2. By 1999, USA passed Japan as the industrial country with longest working hours
3. 1960's it took one full time wage earner to support a family of four, 2014 it take two full time wage earners to support a family of three
4. 2011 Expedia Survey:
 - Americans gave back an average of 3 vacation days in 2003 (\$20 billion)
 - Americans gave back an average of 4 vacation days in 2011 (\$67 billion)
 - Only 38% of Americans used all their vacation days
 - 72% regularly check in with office and do work work while on vacation:most frequently cited reason is fear of being seen as “slacker” or getting drastically behind the demands of their job
5. The number of American families that regularly eat dinner together or take vacations together has dropped by more than one third since 1970



The Costs of Anxiety Driven Work Styles

1. 2013 Harris Interactive Poll found that 83% of American workers say they are stressed out on the job. 75% of workers report physical symptoms of stress.
2. Workplace stress costs our economy \$300 billion dollars per year.
3. **Coping equals escape**
 - ❖ **Cocooning**: urban-suburban pattern of retreating further into self-absorption and isolation; **Flopping** is term used to include the TV
 - ❖ Technologies feed the tendency to *cocoon*, the resulting isolation and disconnection from each other and the need to have the “latest and greatest”.
 - ❖ The US Food and Drug Administration estimates that **more than 100,000 people die annually from “properly” prescribed medications**, making prescription drugs the 4th leading cause of death in the US.
 - ❖ In 2013 the NIH found that the **US had the highest rates of illicit and prescription drug** use among the top 16 developed countries



The Human Costs of Affluenza

1. The rate of **clinical depression** in the US today is **ten times** what it was before 1945
2. Americans consume over half of the world's antidepressants
3. **Youth suicide rates have tripled** since the 1960's
4. General Social Survey (Miller McPherson, Duke University) and US Census Data
 - Average number of close confidants **dropped from 3 to 2** between 1985 and '04
 - 25% of those surveyed (GSS) indicated they had **0 close confidants**
 - Single person households: **1940 7%, 2012 27%**
5. "School performance, public health, crime rates, clinical depression, tax compliance, philanthropy, race relations, community development, census returns, teen suicide, economic productivity, campaign finance, even simple human happiness- all are demonstrably affected by how (and whether) we connect with our family, friends, neighbors and coworkers."
6. Affluent classes are frequently characterized by intolerance of human frailty and unable to embrace the reality of inequalities.
 - Your life is easy...; Others have it worse...; You should be ashamed..."
7. "In **1958, 73% of Americans surveyed by Gallup said they trusted the federal government** to do what was right either "most of the time" or "just about always", a number that had plummeted to **19% by 2013.**



Yearning for Balance

Views of Americans on Consumption, Materialism and the Environment

1995 Harwood Group Report, Commissioned by Merck Family Fund

Four Key Findings:

- 1. American's believe our priorities are out of whack.** People of all backgrounds share certain fundamental concerns about the values they see driving our society. They believe materialism, greed, and selfishness increasingly dominate American life, crowding out a more meaningful set of values centered on family, responsibility, and community. People express a strong desire for a greater sense of balance in their lives - not to repudiate material gain, but to bring it more into proportion with the non-material rewards of life.
- 2. Americans are alarmed about the future.** People feel that the material side of the American Dream is spinning out of control, that the effort to keep up with the Joneses is increasingly unhealthy and destructive: "The Joneses is killing me," declared a man in one focus group. People are particularly concerned about the implications of our skewed priorities for children and future generations - they see worse trouble ahead if we fail to change course.
- 3. Americans are ambivalent about what to do.** Most people express strong ambivalence about making changes in their own lives and in our society. They want to have financial security and live in material comfort, but their deepest aspirations are non-material ones. People also struggle to reconcile their condemnation of other Americans' choices on consumption with their core belief in the freedom to live as we choose. Thus, while people may want to act on their concerns, they are paralyzed by the tensions and contradictions embedded in their own beliefs. In turn, they shy away from examining too closely not only their own behavior, but that of others.
- 4. Americans see the environment as connected to these concerns** - in general terms. People perceive a connection between the amount we buy and consume and their concerns about environmental damage, but their understanding of the link is somewhat vague and general. People have not thought deeply about the ecological implications of their own lifestyles; yet there is an intuitive sense that our propensity for "more, more, more" is unsustainable.

Summary:

1. **Affluenza points to** wealthy privilege without community connections
2. **Affluenza points to** social milieu in which material gain serves a surrogate for personal and social connections
3. **Affluenza points to** cultural context in which individual, family and community health is failing- *there exists a lot of pain.*

**Is AHC serving a community in which the cultural context is characterized by affluenza?
If yes, how can AHC reach and influence this audience?**

Edward Luttwak (former Reagan adviser):

“The contradiction between wanting rapid economic growth and dynamic economic change and at the same time wanting family values, community values and stability is a contradiction so huge that it can only last because of an ***aggressive refusal to think about it.***”





Addressing Affluenza as a Root Cause

1. **Enforcement Strategies-** *policies and practices that “corral” risky behavior*
2. **Social Norms Strategies:** *Cause it to be thought about-*
 - Raise awareness of the problem- make the forest apparent for the trees
 - A. Stress resulting from *competitive comparisons*
 - B. Over emphasis on performance and achievement vs. character and community
 - **Raise awareness of alternative priorities:** emphasizes and means of promoting/enforcing
3. **Promote holding children accountable**
 - For their wants- self-esteem is function of self-generated outcomes
 - * Material indulgence must not serve as compensation for guilt or anxiety about absence
 - * Tangibly “working for” or “earning” access develops confidences that can not be developed by other means
 - For their actions and the consequences of those actions
4. **Promote engaging children/teens in**
 - Age appropriate problem solving
 - Process of compromise
 - Meaningful service to others



