

## Kids, consumerism & materialism

Christopher Zinn consumer empowerment & campaigning

## What in the world?



" It's hard to put a price on the first birthday of your only child."

## Definitions:

Kids  
Vulnerable  
or savvy?



## Consumerism

- *Melbourne research:* main reason we work longer hours is to service debt to feed consumerism.
- Do kids want our time or money?



## Materialism

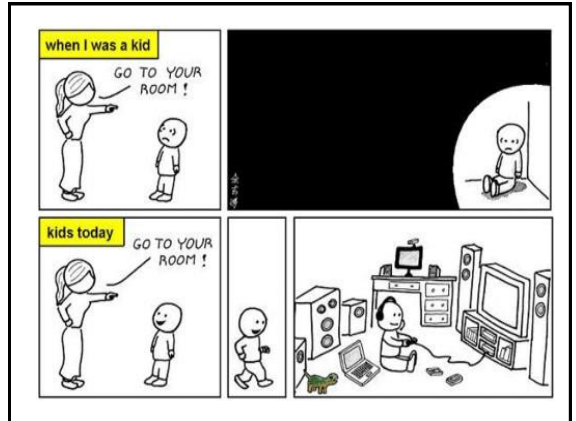
Personality trait & enduring value



drugs & alcohol, sexualisation, obesity, screen time etc



Not as quaint as it seems



*“Children are particularly vulnerable to this sort of manipulation.”*



Australia's 10-13 year olds spend more time on internet than watching TV or socialising. It's their #1 pastime



- 200 brand images in one minute
- Cancer Council 2012 fame and shame award

Cashed up Australian teens are given on average \$5000 a year



brands, brand bullying & belonging

What the research tells us

## Symptoms ascribed to consumerism:

- loneliness social isolation
- anxiety
- depression
- greater susceptibility mental disorders
- lack sense of purpose

## Journal Consumer Research

"By the time children reach early adolescence, and experience a decline in self-esteem, *the stage is set for the use of material possessions as a coping strategy for feelings of low self-worth.*"

Chaplin and John 2007

Research shows low self-esteem & materialism are not only a correlation but also have a causal relationship.

Low self-esteem increases materialism.

Raising self-esteem decreases materialism.

Highly **materialistic** US teens felt increased self esteem after interventions to cut focus on their 'stuff'

*Parents trap children into a cycle of compulsive consumerism by showering them with toys, gifts and designer labels instead of spending time with them.*

UNICEF report 2011

### Commercial World on Children's Wellbeing Report of an Independent Assessment

For the Department for Children, Schools and Families  
and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport

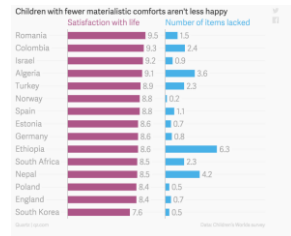
*We need to look at children's consumption in the round, in relation to broader changes in the economy and in family life, without succumbing to nostalgia for a mythical golden age.*



children consumer culture project University of Sussex  
Three years, 1500 kids on materialistic values



## Changing trends?



Across 15 countries no correlation between how satisfied children were and how many material goods they lacked

Children's World Survey 2015



Reduce TV  
Mindfulness  
Talk about ads  
Reduce expectations  
Watch self

What we can do as families

## Advertising bans & controls

### Financial literacy and consumer education

What we can do as a society

*Ultimately, the commercial world is not going to disappear.*

*Children and parents need to understand how it works and learn to deal with it.*

UK report

**Protect when younger, empower when older**

Is it just nations flying too high?



If you want your children to turn out well, spend twice as much time with them, and half as much money

*Abigail Van Buren 'Dear Abby'*

[zinnchris@gmail.com](mailto:zinnchris@gmail.com)

[@christopherzinn](#)

[www.determinedconsumer.com.au](http://www.determinedconsumer.com.au)

[www.adviserratings.com.au](http://www.adviserratings.com.au)