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DEEP DIVE:
THE FOUR SOURCES OF HAPPINESS

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THOMAS JEFFERSON THEN AND NOW:
THE LEGACY AND LESSONS OF AN AMERICAN ORIGINAL

MR. GILBERT: Wow, it turns out people are interested in happiness.

(Laughter)

MR. GILBERT: How great to be back here talking about this topic for, I think, the third time. And usually when you talk about a topic three times, the audiences get smaller. But for happiness, they just get bigger and bigger. If there is a human being or, maybe I should even say, any animal on the planet that doesn't care about happiness, it is obviously very good at hiding because no scientist has ever located it.

If you look at our constitution, it promises us three things: life guaranteed, liberty guaranteed, but not happiness, just the pursuit of it. I was reminded last night by a friend I had dinner with that Ben Franklin commented on this and he said -- I pulled up his quote. He said, "The U.S. Constitution doesn't guarantee happiness, only the pursuit of it. You have to catch up with it yourself."

(Laughter)

MR. GILBERT: Well, people do try to catch up with happiness. In fact, that's not a bad description of what most human lives are about. And all over the globe, when they're trying to catch up with happiness, they're doing it by catching up in four ways. Thank you. First, they're seeking pleasure; from chocolate to sex, from opera to drugs and rock and roll, all forms of enchantment are sources of pleasure. Most of us think that happiness comes in part from the pleasures of the senses and the pleasures of the mind.

We're also seekers of material things. We're like all other animals; we need stuff to survive, but we pursue stuff and then pursue it with great ardor. Marriage, romantic relationships, almost everybody all over the world believes that happiness is in part due to a

form of coupling with another human being. And then finally, children. What do we call them? Bundles of joy. They're named after happiness itself.

These are the ingredients all over the globe for the "happy life." What science has told us in the last 20 years or so, economists, psychologists, neuroscientists, sociologists, demographers is that the picture is just a whole lot more complicated than that; the pursuing and then the catching. Because it turns out that some of the things we're pursuing actually can't be caught. And some of the things we're catching, we shouldn't have been pursuing in the first place.

That's what we're going to hear about today from four experts, each on one of the topics that I just articulated to you. Every minute I speak is a minute less that you can hear from them, and that would be a crime. Without further ado, let me introduce you to our first speaker, Paul Bloom.

(Applause)

MR. GILBERT: I forgot to introduce Paul.

(Laughter)

MR. GILBERT: Paul Bloom, my friend, professor of Psychology and Cognitive Sciences from Yale University. Many of you know him not only because he writes wonderful popular books like "How Pleasure Works" or "Just Babies," but also because he's -- we have scientists and journalists on our panel today. Paul is the only one who is both. So you also read his work, for example, in *The Atlantic* where he writes articles like "Is God an Accident."

(Laughter)

MR. GILBERT: Yes. So without further ado, my friend, Paul Bloom. Paul, will you come up? Ah, he's already --

(Applause)

MR. BLOOM: I'd like to thank you all for being here, and thank the Aspen Ideas Festival for hosting this, thank my co-panelists, but particularly thank Dan Gilbert for inviting me to this. I want to talk about the pleasures of everyday life and I want to present a certain, maybe, surprising perspective on how to think about pleasure. Then I want to talk about a problem of pleasure. And it's a problem I have and I bet just about everybody here has it too. Then I'm going to solve the problem. And I guarantee you, you will not like the solution.

(Laughter)

MR. BLOOM: This is Hermann Goring. Goring was Hitler's second in command, his designated successor. And like his boss, Goring fancied himself a collector of art and he went through Europe during World War II, stealing, extorting, and sometimes buying various art work for his collection. And he amassed a huge collection, but what he really wanted was a Vermeer. Hitler had two, he didn't have any. He wanted one for himself. And finally he got one from this Dutch art dealer, Han van Meegeren, bought a Vermeer for the equivalent of what now would be 8 million dollars, and it was his most prized possession.

So the war comes to an end. He's tried at Nuremberg and sentenced to death for crimes against humanity. And soon the Allied Forces go through his collection and all the records and they find out who sold him these different art works. And so one day in Amsterdam, they go knocking on van Meegeren's door and he's arrested. He's arrested for the crime of selling this great Dutch masterpiece to an occupying war criminal.

And he spends about a few weeks in prison, and he can't take it anymore. And he demands to see the warden, and he says, I confess I'm guilty, but I'm not guilty of the crime you're charging me with. I did not sell a Vermeer to this occupying Nazi. Rather I'm a forger, I painted it myself. And they didn't believe him. So he said, I'll prove it; bring me paints and canvas into my cell and I will paint another picture as good as I sold

Goring. They bring him paint and canvas, and for a day he does nothing. And he says, I can't work under these conditions. I need alcohol and morphine.

(Laughter)

MR. BLOOM: Like me, it's the only way he could work.

(Laughter)

MR. BLOOM: So he does this, he creates this beautiful painting. The charges of treason are dropped, he gets charged with a lesser crime of forgeries and he basically gets a sentence and dies before -- dies of a heart attack before he goes to prison, a hero to the Dutch people, the man who swindled Goring. Now, there's more to be said about him. He's an extraordinary character. But I want to move to Goring. Goring was, by all accounts, a horrible man. His American interrogators described him as an amicable psychopath. But I find it -- I find I can get some sympathy for his situation.

This is a picture of him talking to his lawyer at Nuremberg; he'd been sentenced to death. And his lawyer comes and says to him essentially, Hermann, I have some bad news for you. And he says this thing you bought that you thought was a Vermeer is actually a forgery. According to his biographer -- whoops, there should be something there -- anyway, he looked as if for the first time he saw there was evil in the world.

(Laughter)

MR. BLOOM: And he discovered that his -- that the painting he thought was that painting was actually not, it was actually that painting. Now, they looked alike, but they had different histories, and the histories mattered. It wasn't just him. Once van Meegeren was on trial, he couldn't stop boasting. And it turned out that many of the paintings that the Dutch people thought were the great Vermeer's, including this one, the "Supper at Emmaus," were actually Van Meegeren's. At that point when this was discovered, the value of this painting dropped,

because it was discovered not to be that painting of huge value, but rather that painting of no value at all.

So as a psychologist, this fascinates me. Our obsession with the history of things and the pleasure we get from them, our obsession with the hidden essence of things and how we perceive them, and it turns out that this is not special to art. It happens with even the most fundamental sensory pleasures. So take who you find attractive. These are attractive people. We tested with Yale undergraduates and they said, yeah, they're attractive people.

(Laughter)

MR. BLOOM: But how attractive you find them will depend on what you think you're looking at. You'd probably think the person on the left is male and the person on the right is female. If that belief turns out to be wrong, it will make a difference. It will make a difference if you turned out you're mistaken about how young or how old they are. If you discovered that one of the people you're looking at with lust in your heart is actually your mother or father, picture taken way back, this will actually cause a severe influence on the pleasure you get from art work. You may say well, wow, dad used to be hot, but you won't feel the same feelings of romantic or sexual attraction.

It will make a difference if you know these people how much you like them. One of the nicest findings in psychology is the more you like a person, the better they look to you. This explains the mystery, which is why couples in good relationships each find their partner so much better looking than anyone else in the world finds them.

(Laughter)

MR. BLOOM: Because it's not like you think, oh, my husband looks like a toad, but I love him very much. Rather if you love him very much, he no longer looks like a toad. This is an old insight. Shakespeare once put it, "Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind."

Then there's food. How do you make children think carrots and milk taste better? Not just make them more willing to take it, but that they taste better? Simple, remove them from a McDonald's bag. They associate McDonald's with good taste and then it tastes better. How do you make adults think that orange juice tastes better? Make it bright orange. How do you make ice cream taste better? Tell people it's full fat. How do you make wine taste better? Simple, pour it from an expensive bottle. This has a profound effect.

It turns out that this is one of the few neuroscience studies I really love. They got people into a magnet and they have a tube in their mouth and they're sipping wine while their brains are being scanned. In front of them is a screen describing the wine. They all drink the same wine. But half are told it's a cheap stuff and half are told it's expensive stuff. As expected, this influences how they rate the wine. But it also seems to really affect areas of the brain devoted to sensory pleasure. When they think they're drinking the cheap stuff, these areas lie dormant, but when they think they're drinking expensive stuff, they light up like a Christmas tree.

A third example after sex and food and drink, is consumer products. These are shoes, some golf clubs and a chewed-up piece of bubble gum. An economist will tell you that the value of these objects can be determined through their utility, but plainly that's not the only factor at work. Each of these objects has value above and beyond its utility through its history.

The golf clubs were owned by John F. Kennedy and sold for three-quarters of a million dollars even though they aren't pretty good golf clubs, but they had -- they got their value through the connection. The bubble gum was chewed by Britney Spears and sold for a couple of hundred dollars at auction. And the shoes may be the most valuable of all. According to an unconfirmed *New York Times* report, a Saudi millionaire offered ten million dollars for that pair of shoes. And these were the shoes thrown at George Bush at an Iraqi press conference.

(Laughter)

MR. BLOOM: So history matters. And my colleagues and I at Yale have tried to explore this. So on one study, we asked people who their most favorite living person in the world is. Many of our subjects say George Clooney. So we say, fine, how much would you pay for a sweater owned by and worn by George Clooney? Well, whoops, the numbers are not showing up, but it was \$135. And that's more than what one would pay for a sweater that was owned by a normal person, just who gets its value.

Then we told another group of people how much would you pay for it if you can't boast about it, you can't resell it. And now the amount of money drops a little bit. It drops by about \$10. So this has sort of influence. But then we tell another group of subjects how much would you pay for it if before it got to you, it's a thoroughly washed? Now the number drops significantly. As my wife put it, "You've washed away the Clooney cooties."

(Laughter)

MR. BLOOM: We did a similar study where we asked people who do you dislike most in the world. And by -- when the study was done, the answer was Bernie Madoff by many a subject. And we asked them how much would you pay for a sweater owned and worn by Bernie Madoff. Here everything changes. Being owned by a character nobody likes drops the value for most people. For some people the value goes up, but for those people the value goes up, those people only want it in so far that they could sell it or they could boast about it.

We did a study, George Newman and I did a study looking at auctions, real-world auctions, and what we found was that the physical contacts factoring everything else up, the physical contact of an object raises the value of auction of a favorite character, like a John F. Kennedy, Jacqueline Onassis or Marilyn Monroe, and slightly drops it for a disfavored character like Bernie Madoff.

So all of these are examples of how our beliefs about the history of something influence the value that we give to it. And you could bring this back to art where there's a world of difference between something being original and something being a forgery. And that aspect of history influences how much you like it. Or to take another example, this is a Jackson Pollock. How many people here like the work of Jackson Pollock? Be honest. How many people -- there's nothing for you? Okay. Almost 50, slightly two-thirds and one-third. I have nothing to say about who's right. But I'll point out that how much you like that art work is influenced by how difficult and complex you think it is to make it. Your beliefs about the history -- the historical facts that go into its production influence the pleasure you get from it.

And there's all sorts of examples of this. My favorite example is the modernist composition by John Cage, "4'33", where -- some of you may know, somebody goes up, sits down at a bench, opens a piano and there's total silence for 4 minutes and 33 seconds. People might differ as to what you think of that. What I just want to point out is you can buy this from iTunes.

(Laughter)

MR. BLOOM: That is for a small sum of money, you can purchase those moments of silence distinguished from plain old silence you get for free prior its history.

(Laughter)

MR. BLOOM: So I'm putting forth a certain perspective on pleasure in which your beliefs about something's history influences the pleasure you get from something. Now, I want to get to a problem. This is my study at home. I have on my study a computer with an Internet connection through which like everyone else here, I can watch just about any movie I can think of, any television show, I could play any composition or opera or song I could imagine. On my computer, and also on my tablet and on my iPhone, I can read just about any book I could think about. If my 12-year-old self knew that as an

adult he would have this immense bounty of possible pleasures, he would say, boy, as an adult I'm going to be very happy indeed. But I'm not. With these bounty of pleasures, I often sit up late at night, stare at my computer, drink whisky and Google myself. I mean --

(Laughter)

MR. BLOOM: So you might be thinking that's a really strange character up here. But it's not just me. This is a graph of mean happiness in the United States for the last 60 years. Just by -- through the standard measures of telling people -- oh, it's not going to be two minutes -- okay, anyway, by the standard measures that people use, these are the points of inventions of Google, iTunes and Amazon, and has made no difference.

(Laughter)

MR. BLOOM: Why not? Well, you notice -- in other words, why aren't we happier with these pleasures in which we have an enormous amount of choice and very little effort? And I think the answer is that we have an enormous amount of choice with very little effort. Many psychologists have found, Dan Gilbert including, that the more choices we have, the less pleasure we get from what we ultimately decide, often because we're fraught with regret.

Psychologists have found that the harder you work for a pleasure, the more you enjoy it. This is true for both intangible pleasures, but also the things you create. That's now called the IKEA effect, reflecting the fact that the furniture you build by yourself is so much better than the furniture you might buy from someplace else. So what's this illusion to this problem? Well, one thing is you could take away these easy pleasures. Remove your computer, buy records, buy physical books, don't go online, remove the ease of the pleasure.

You could also remove the choice. Consult an oracle, let somebody else choose for you. These are both examples of what philosophers and theologians have described as self-binding, acting now to restrain your

choices and your access in the future. The classic illustration of self-binding is Ulysses who asked his sailors working under him to bind him to the mast so he can enjoy the song of the sirens without wading into the water. The thing is, self-binding is difficult. Look at him.

(Laughter)

MR. BLOOM: Self-binding is difficult. It requires self-control, planning, intelligence and hard work. And very few of us are going to do it. This problem that we suffer from and the possible solutions, I think are one consequence of an important insight of pleasure, a pleasure which -- an insight which has been pointed out by many people, it has -- my favorite articulation is from John Milton, who put it in the words who had Satan express this, "The mind is its own place and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven." Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. GILBERT: Pleasure may be a mystery, but hearing Paul talk is always a pleasure. What next? Well, like every animal, we need stuff to survive. That's what animals do; they gather the things they need; from food to nesting materials. What makes this animal unique is we're the only animal that continues to gather more material even when we have all we need. You do it, I do it. And as we're doing it, as we're pursuing stuff in our lives, in the back of our minds, we're thinking why exactly am I doing this.

Tim Kasser is the psychologist in the United States who has moved that question from the back of the mind to the front of the mind. He studies why people deny climate change; he studies the commercialization of children, but he also studies consumerism. Next slide, please, and then the one after that. Blank, good. One more. That's it. Thank you. And he is the author of this wonderful book, "The High Price of Materialism." The point of the book is -- I'm going to let Tim tell you.

(Applause)

MR. KASSER: Hi. Thanks for having me. It's great to be here. It's great to see so many of you here today. So I'm going to talk about happiness in the "goods" life today. And note that, you know, in America, we are continually bombarded with all kinds of different messages telling us that the way to happiness is through our possessions. This is a photo of a average American family at the time the photo was taken with all of the possessions in their house plus their house. It's a great photo series, by the way, because the photographer went all over the world doing the same basic photo in various countries around the world.

So we get these messages which tell us that our happiness depends upon the amount of money that we have in our wallet or our bank account or in our stock portfolio, the amount of stuff we have and whether or not we have the right stuff. And we have these messages obviously from advertisements, but we see them from our politicians all of the time too, who are very interested in increasing our consumption so that economic growth goes up. And these messages have been really successful in terms of socializing us into the belief that it's important to make a lot of money.

So what I'm about to show you is a slide that comes from studies done at the University of California, Los Angeles. Every year since the late 1960s, they ask about 100,000 incoming college freshmen about what's important to them. This blue line is the percentage who say that it's very important or essential to be very well-off financially, and what you can see is that it's gone from around the 40 percents back in the late 1960s to over 70 percent today. And I can -- actually the latest polls show it getting close up to 80 percent of freshmen who are saying it's very important or essential to be very well-off financially.

Notice the red line by the way. This is the percentage who say that it's very important or essential to develop a meaningful philosophy of life. What you see is that that has fallen during this same time period.

Later on, I hope that finding will make some sense to you. So we get all of these messages about what the good life is, that the good life is the goods life. And we're told that we can purchase happiness. Happiness is for sale on the Internet, at the mall, and just about any place today and that we're a successful people and we'll have meaningful lives if we get this money and we get these possessions and the right image, which is almost always mediated through our possessions.

So the thing I've been interested in over the last 20 years is whether or not these messages are true, okay. What happens when we do take on these materialistic messages? What happens when we do believe these ideals of consumer capitalism? And what our research has been showing is that there are personal, social and ecological costs associated with these beliefs.

Before I turn to that research, I just want to be clear how it is that most psychologists said about studying materialism and measuring materialism. There's lots of ways to measure materialism. But the most prominent ways, one of them comes from work that my colleagues and I have developed, a value strategy, where what we do is we ask people about the importance of a wide variety of goals, spirituality and family and hedonism and pleasure, and in addition, some materialistic values like the ones that you see up here on the screen. And we see how important these kinds of materialistic values are in comparison to these other non-materialistic values.

Another strategy is just to present people with statements like these and see how much they agree or disagree with them. It really pretty much doesn't matter which way you measure materialism in these studies. Pretty much you see the same thing either way. So let's start with the well-being correlates of materialism. This is where my research started more than 20 years ago now. And what people have found since the research that we conducted and others conducted in the early 1990s is that over and over, we find a negative association between the extent to which people endorse these materialistic values to the extent that they believe that happiness comes from money and possessions and their personal well-being. So

as materialism goes up, their personal well-being goes down.

Last year I was involved in a meta-analysis. If you don't know what a meta-analysis is, it's a very powerful statistical technique whereby you take a whole bunch of different individual studies and you average them together to get a sense of whether or not the finding of any one study replicates across lots of other different studies. In this particular meta-analysis, we had over 258 samples. So we had 258 samples with over 51,000 people in them across those samples where there was a measure of materialism and a measure of well-being. It was a fairly diverse sample.

And what we found was that there was a consistent negative association between the extent to which people pursued these material values and their well-being. So we found, for example -- and these are listed in order of strength of finding. So one of the strongest findings was that the more that people pursued materialistic values, the fewer pleasant emotions they experienced, okay. The less they experienced joy, the less they experienced contentment. Their overall well-being was worse. They had lower self-esteem. They actually had lower physical health as well, okay, more stomach aches, back aches, headaches, things like that, and lower overall life satisfaction.

At the same time, the more the people were materialistic, the higher they were in compulsive consumption; they couldn't stop buying stuff, and as a result, acquired more debt, oftentimes. They had more health-risk behaviors like smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol, more of a negative self-concepts, had more negative things about themselves, more depression and anxiety and more experience of unpleasant emotions like anger, anxiety, et cetera.

Now, why is this the case? Now, there's been a variety of different people who've tried to explain why people when they really value the pursuit of money are less happy. And there are different reasons why this might be the case. I'm going to focus on one that has the

most empirical evidence. And in order to understand this, I have to kind of back up for a second and explain something about value systems. So materialism, the desire for money and possessions is a value. It's something you think is important, okay. It's a goal that you have in mind that you want to pursue. And goals and values exist in broader systems. And these are dynamic systems.

And I'm going to show you here one particular dynamic system which has been empirically validated. In this study, we had 11 different kinds of values. We looked at people in 15 different nations around the world. And we used this fancy statistical technique called circular stochastic modeling. What this technique does is it takes all of the values and it puts them along the circumference of a circle. I'm going to show you that in a second.

Values which are next to each other are values which people experience as relatively easy to simultaneously pursue. Values on the opposite side of the circle are values where there's a tension, where it's difficult to do them both at the same time because they're in conflict. There's a lot of information on this circumplex. Don't focus on it all. I'm just going to have you focus on a couple of things.

First, one of the things we found was that when people set a value like image and financial success, or financial success was important, they would view them both as important, okay. So look here; you see that image is associated with both popularity and financial success. Makes sense, right? When I care about my image, why? So I can be popular. What does it take to get an image? Well, usually it takes money.

Look at the values on the opposite side of the circumplex. These are what we call the intrinsic values. And we call these the intrinsic values because from our theoretical perspective, they're intrinsically satisfying to pursue. They do a good job of meeting our psychological needs. The main intrinsic values we focus on are self-acceptance or personal growth, affiliation, and community feeling; so growing as a person, being

connected to people and contributing to the broader world.

How many of you remember your high-school geometry and how many degrees there are in a circle? 360, right? So perfect opposition between two values will be represented by 180 degrees of opposition, right? Financial success and community feeling were 193 degrees opposed in our analyses. It's difficult to simultaneously be greedy and generous, okay.

(Laughter)

MR. KASSER: It's difficult to simultaneously focus on these materialistic values at the same time that you're focusing on these intrinsic values. And this to me is the key for why materialism is not so hot for our well-being because it's like a seesaw. As those materialistic values go up, the intrinsic values are crowded out, okay, and we have less space in our life to pursue our own personal growth, to pursue our relationships with others, to pursue contributing to the larger community.

And these are the values which our research shows are the ones that satisfy our psychological needs and make us happy. So by focusing around materialistic values, what we're doing is we're orienting our lives in ways which undermine our ability to focus on the values which really will make us happy. Now, you might look at these data and say to yourself, you know, I'll be a little less satisfied with my life so I can have a nicer handbag, you know, or I'll take a few more headaches in my life so I can have more money. And you know, I'm not here to tell you how to live your life. It's your life, your choice.

The problem, though, is that materialism is not associated only with undermining our own well-being. This man, for example, in his pursuit of money is willing to threaten, manipulate and potentially hurt other people, because he's robbing a bank. I never thought I'd be at a talk where I also show are two Bernie Madoff slides in a row.

(Laughter)

MR. KASSER: But these guys did the same thing, right. Already very wealthy people, but their materialistic values drove them to want even more. Their greed made them want even more, which led them to engage in behaviors which hurt lots and lots of people. Now we know from the research that when people endorse these materialistic values, they endorse more Machiavellian attitudes, they're more willing to manipulate other people in order for their own gain. They're less concerned with corporate social responsibility, for example.

They have less pro-social behaviors like helping and sharing, more anti-social behaviors like cheating and stealing. And even when they play something called the prisoner's dilemma game with their friends and they could earn points by either cooperating or competing, more materialistic people choose to compete rather than to cooperate, which may be good for them, but not so good for their friends.

Now, if our materialistic values lead us to treat other people not so well, it's not too big of a jump to then think about how our materialistic values lead us to treat other species and the earth. It's in our desire for more and more stuff that we're pumping noxious gases into the water and into the atmosphere, that we're using up habitat in order to have more malls and subdivisions.

And indeed the research shows in another much smaller meta-analysis that the more the people are focused on materialism, the worse their ecological attitudes. They tend to just care less about other species and about the earth, and the worst, their ecological behaviors. They have higher ecological footprints, engage in fewer positive ecological behaviors and more damaging ecological behaviors. Why?

Well, for me, it's pretty much the same explanation here. If we go back to the circumplex model, what happens is, is that our materialistic values crowd out the intrinsic values, especially the community feeling values. They crowd out the values that our research knows or shows are the ones that lead us to treat others in a more equal and positive way as well as the intrinsic

values that lead us to care about the planet and the species that inhabit it. So, in some, there is the high price of materialism.

(Laughter)

MR. KASSER: I thank you for your attention.

(Applause)

MR. GILBERT: Terrific. Well, there is a high cost for materialism and those of you who took this talk to heart, please know there will be boxes when you leave, you can deposit watches and jewelry in them to shed -- begin shedding your materialistic values.

(Laughter)

MR. GILBERT: One of the things Tim said resonates, I think, with all of us, which is to the extent we're pursuing stuff we're not pursuing something else and that something else is usually social relationships. When you ask people what it takes to be happy, one of the highest strength often number one things is love, they say. And by that they mean romantic love, some kind of enduring bond with another partner.

Now, you would expect psychologists to just know a hell of a lot about this given that it's basically the most important thing to most human beings and they don't. And the reason they don't is psychologist are very good at studying extremely simple things that you can look at in a laboratory. It's very hard to study love and the kinds of relationships it produces. But someone named Eli Finkel, in the last 15 years professor at Northwestern University, has been defying those odds and producing an astounding body of beautiful science on the nature of romantic relationships and particularly marriage.

His forthcoming book, "The All-or-Nothing Marriage," which sounds like it might have been written by Dr. Phil, but is, in fact, a wonderful deep intellectual history of the institution of marriage, is a book you're going to want to buy. We're going to hear from Eli right

now.

(Applause)

MR. FINKEL: Thank you. Thank you, Dan, very much. This one is working too, sweet. Thank you to everybody involved in the institute and for that over-kind introduction, and for the slide advancer. So, the talk today is "The All-or-Nothing Marriage" or the subtitle "Why the Best Marriages Today are Flourishing Like Never Before and How the Rest of Us Can Share in the Bliss." And as Dan said, I'm a psychologist; this is going to be a psychological assessment of marriage in America today, but to do that well, we need to adopt an historical perspective on these things.

And when I start thinking about the history of how we think about marriage, one of my favorite places to start is with George Bernard Shaw, who in his preface to his play "Becoming Married," he says the following -- you might be familiar with this, "When two people are under the influence of the most violent, most insane, most delusive and most transient of passions, they are required to swear that they will remain in that excited, abnormal and exhausting condition continuously until death do them part."

And it's funny, that's funny. I love it, you love it and the reason why it's funny is because we know that we tend to rate passionate love very highly when making marital decisions. Marital decisions tend to be things that we at least intend to be in perpetuity and yet romantic passion tends to be fairly fickle. But I actually am bringing up this quote today for a different purpose, which is as the historian, Stephanie Coontz, tells us for thousands of years, this joke would have fallen flat. And the reason why this joke would have fallen flat is because nobody ever thought that romantic love was a good idea, a good basis for marriage, right. That's something that's really quite modern.

We, in our main discussions, in our culture about marriage is like, for example, marriage in America, we tend to think of the foundation as the 1950s. By the

way, who is this? Warren Judd, here they are, Warren Judd. So we tend to think of the 1950s. We call that traditional marriage and we sort of implicitly assume that in perpetuity going backwards that marriage was like this. But the truth is the 1950s was a highly anomalous era in a lot of different ways, but particularly regarding marriage. Basically what we're looking at is a very brief eye blink of historical time and we're calling that the way we always were, right. But it wasn't, it wasn't the way we always were.

And in fact, what I want to do today is map the way historians of the family think about the trajectory of marriage in our country, in America, and then I want to tie it together and talk about how this all relates to the psychology of marriage today. So, according to the historians, they tell us that there are basically three different eras that we've been through and this goes back to the very beginning, right. So, back to the 1600s, we can think about the arrival at Plymouth Rock.

But we don't need to start all the way back there, but pretty much from that spot up until industrialization really takes off around 1850, you live a life that is pretty hard to recognize. It's pretty hard for us to do the mental time travel required from the 21st century to think about what life was like. When we think about work and economic production, we think about like, going somewhere and maybe earning a wage and coming back and using that money to buy something like a sweater or basically everything possible, ideally, I'll take your jewelry for no money.

So, we tend to think in a certain way about how economic production works. But the unit of economic production throughout the colonial era and really until about 1850 was the individual farmhouse. And in this individual farmhouse, the husband and the wife were crucial economic producers. The idea that she sort of tended to the home while he earned his economic, you know, earned his -- earned the money for the household is a new idea. That idea didn't exist when the farmhouse was the unit of economic production. Somebody was out collecting food, somebody was out hunting, somebody was tending to

the vegetable garden, somebody was sowing the clothing, right, because there was no place to go out and buy clothing, right. And so both of them were huge contributors at a time when there was no social safety net, there was no education system, right, there was -- these institutions didn't exist, they happened in the family.

Now, let's fast forward a little bit. Now, we come to an era where industrialization starts to kick off and things start to change and in the amorous marriage, the second type of marriage, the central factor that matters is love. We marry because we want companionship, because we want intimacy, because we want passion and for the first time in human history, the definition or benchmark for success of a marriage is personal fulfillment; personal, emotional and psychological fulfillment. That's a new idea. That idea did not exist until around this era.

So, this man, a French nobleman -- many of you will know him as Alexis de Tocqueville, "Democracy in America." He advanced this idea that Americans were generating a brand-new model, a brand-new approach to marriage that he called the "democratic marriage." Now, it's not democratic in the infinite sense that we might wish it were, but basically instead of a patriarchal hierarchical system where the man is the ultimate monarch of his little commonwealth and his wife is his subject, which is really the way things were in the 1600s and 1700s, now they have separate spheres of influence.

The man is high in what we might call agency. So, he is very oriented toward commerce and law, toward the external world if he will. The woman, the wife, is more oriented toward what we might call communion, warmth, nurturance, the household, taking care of the children, moral piety, right, and each of them is the undisputed authority on those separate domains, in those separate spheres. So, what we end up with is we have this love-based marriage and we've got these separate spheres and then as these things are emerging, the economic system changes in the most radical way that has ever existed, industrialization happens.

What happens once society industrializes, society urbanizes. What happens one society urbanizes, people, young people come from rural areas but also from other countries, mainly from Europe during this era and they settle in American cities and this does something remarkable. For the first time in human history, large swathes of young people are both economically and geographically independent from their parents and from their broader social networking. What does that allow them to do? It allows them to make their own marital decisions.

And when they can make their own marital decisions and they live in the world where they value things like personal fulfillment and personal happiness and love, what decisions do they make? They marry for love. And so these trend starts around -- it really comes in the being around 1850 and it increases over time and then we come back to Warren Judd, they got it, right. Dan talked earlier about how sometimes we get exactly what we always wish for and we're left flat. That's what happen in America.

We worked forever. For centuries these ideas were coming together that we would have a love-based, breadwinner/homemaker marriage, and this would be the ultimate source of happiness on earth, right. Turns out that we finally got there around 1950 for a bunch of reasons not list of which is our economic -- America's economic dominants in the wake of World War II, left it so that there was huge amounts of wealth creation, that wealth was shared up and down the economic spectrum, so even working-class people for really the first time and the only time -- because this is not true anymore -- were able to support a family on the back of one single wage earner.

What happens, was this the end of marital history? Were we thrilled and settled into this? Well, no, right, we know that this didn't last. Why didn't it last? Well, there are several reasons, but I want to talk about reasons why the ideal itself was flawed from the start. One major problem, several -- people have already

talk about the importance of social relationships. One of the major problems is this love-based breadwinner/homemaker marriage socially isolated the nuclear family. We used to lived in small units, there wasn't a whole lot of mobility, people didn't move all over the place, you were surrounded in your lifetime by your parents, your siblings, your friends and so forth. But now you weren't.

Now, there is a new set of ideas. This was an extremely materialistic era, and what you see is that you make enough money that you move into the suburbs, and then you make a little more money and you move to a different suburb, and then you make a little more money and you move to yet a different suburb. Has anyone done this? You don't have to tell me, right, lots of you have done this, all of us have done this. And so, what's the consequence of that? That we no longer live surrounded by our intimate social networks. What does that mean? The person who has to serve these huge numbers of social and emotional and psychological responsibilities for us is our spouse. We can't turn to our sister, we can't turn to our brother, we can't turn to mom, we can't turn to our cousin, we can't turn to our childhood friends, because we don't live anywhere near them.

Second issue; this one is inherent to the idea of separate spheres. We've built a love-based marriage, right. At the same time, we've planted men and women in separate spheres. How easy is it for men and women in the 1950s to understand what their husband or their wife was going through in a given day? Their lives were fundamentally different and not only were their lives fundamentally different, but they believed that the essential quality of man and woman is like different species basically, totally different spheres and so there is this divide that happens.

Now, enter the 1960s, the third era, which we can call the self-expressive era. Now, we're still in this era today and, in fact, it's gathering steam. In this era, we, of course, still care about love, but we also care about what you might call self-expression or self-actualization related to your idea of self-acceptance

by the way. The idea is there is a core essence within us. There is something unique and special within us and if we can find out what that is and then live in accord with that, that we cannot only make ourselves happy and fulfilled, but fulfill the people around us, make the world a better place, and so forth. And we want our spouses to help us do that.

These ideas -- the intellectual roots of these ideas are manifold, but one I want to talk about is humanistic psychology, particularly the work of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. Many of you will be familiar with Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. At the bottom, you see there is the physiological and safety needs, and then love and belonging in the middle, and esteem and self-actualization at the top.

Three quick things I want to say about this hierarchy in terms of our understanding of marriage. First, how amazingly aligned is Maslow's hierarchy of needs with what historians tell us is the history of marriage in America dating back to colonial times. Start at the bottom, and what you have is a survival basic oriented marriage, then you get to the amorous era, and now you care about love and belongingness, and these days you are at the top of the hierarchy. They're basically totally aligned.

Second thing I want to say, Rogers and Maslow and the rest of the humanists, humanistic psychologists all agree it's hard to get to the top of that hierarchy. Very few of us live lives where we sort of settle in to the self-actualized state and live out our days that way, right. It is hard, it is constant effort, we have to work and introspect and think deeply to discover who we are, the way we can utilize our skills in the way that's best for us and for the world.

Third thing I want to say about it, if you succeed at this very challenging task of achieving self-expression, self-actualization, you should be able to achieve a level of happiness and richness in your life that is largely inaccessible to the rest of us and there's a great quote that was good. Quotes are perhaps

overrated.

(Laughter)

MR. FINKEL: What Maslow says is that as you go from the bottom to the top of that hierarchy, that the greed with fulfilling those needs affects your happiness goes up. Let me be clear about this. Surely it's a good thing to meet your physiological and your safety needs because being alive is generally better than being dead. But when we want to talk about richness and fulfillment and meaning and purpose and a deep internal sense of meaning in our lives, there is nothing quite like which you can get with self-actualization.

Now, Maslow was mainly talking about individuals, but the self-expressive era of marriage is really an era that we're looking to the spouse to facilitate this sort of growth and development. Oh, sweet, right on time. So, Robert Bellah and his colleagues talk about this idea that in expressive individualism, a relationship is created by full sharing of authentic feelings and love becomes the mutual exploration of infinitely rich, complex and exciting selves. This would have gotten you left out of your colonial hamlet --

(Laughter)

MR. FINKEL: -- and certainly is not the sort of individualism that we might have expected from Henry David Thoreau, but it is the modern version of individualism and according to people like Maslow, people like myself, this is a pretty valuable way of trying to pursue things. Here is the thing, if you are able to achieve a marriage that does these things, bully for you. You are probably able to achieve a level of fulfillment in your marriage that would have been unavailable to people who weren't even striving for such a high level of achievement in their marriage.

Second, it's hard. Maslow told us how hard it is one person to achieve self-expression or self-actualization. Two people? Two people, both doing that

and facilitating that for each other? It is a challenging task. What does all that mean? It means that we are afforded today an opportunity to achieve a level of marital access -- success, not access, but maybe --

(Laughter)

MR. FINKEL: -- a level of marital success that was largely unavailable in the past, but that it's hard to do. And at minimum, we should be willing to do if we really are looking for our marriages to do this is to spend the time and the emotional effort to try to understand what is it about my spouse? What is the core essence of my spouse? How is it that I can facilitate her development? Get rid of the, sometimes, unconscious psychological road blocks she confronts that prevents her from achieving her full potential? So, what have we been doing? If we track the amount of time that people are spending with their spouses, are we, in fact, increasing the amount of time that we're putting into the marriage? And what we have here is, oh, perfect.

So, this is the number of hours per week that you spent alone with your spouse and what we see is that if you have no children at home, the decline from 1975 to 2003 is fairly substantial. If you have children at home, it is fairly substantial again. Of course, your life is already pathetic and you have no time for your spouse already, and yet you are still screwed in terms of the amount of time you are getting for your spouse today or in 2003 relative to 1975. I think that's what that says. So, what about -- but it's possible that it's not about the alone time you are getting with your spouse. You're sharing other activities and may be there are other people there. What about other sorts of activities that we engage in?

So this is the percentage of Americans in 1980 and 2000, who said that they're almost always engage in these activities together with their spouse rather than separate from their spouse. Relative to 1980, spouses in 2000 were far less likely to eat their main meal of the day together, go out for leisure together, visit friends together and so forth. So, at a time, when we are

systematically looking for our marriage to do things that require serious time and attention and psychological investment, we seem to invest in more -- be investing less. What should we see? On average, we should see that marital quality is going down and yes, it is.

So, this is data from the general social survey that plots marital quality. The y-axis is a little bias; it's not as dark as it seems, but there has been since the '70s, an 11 percent decline in the percentage of Americans who say they are very happy in their marriage. But please don't leave here with a pessimistic feel for this institution, because there is another slide I want to show you, one last slide. And what I really want to know is not is the average marriage struggling because I think we understand, based on the information I presented, why that's the case.

All we want to understand is are there unique opportunities and affordances for us to achieve a level of marital quality that might have been unavailable before? Now, this is a slightly trickier graph. You can see, I'm plotting time again on the x-axis and what I'm doing is I'm plotting the correlation on the y-axis, and I'll put the thing up here. So, basically what this shows is if you listed yourself as very satisfied in your marriage relative to not very satisfied, how is your overall quality of life?

And as Dan has told us, having a satisfying marriage is today and has long been an extremely important predictor of how happy we are in our life in general. What I hope this graph drives home for you, that affect is twice as large today as it was in the 1970s. The degree to which having a good marriage links you up to a deeply fulfilling happy life is twice as strong today as it was several decades ago. Let me tie this together here in a concluding slide. Oh, there it is, conclusion.

(Laughter)

MR. FINKEL: Okay, are there action implications? I'm going to be brief on this. I will you that I don't believe in one-size-fits-all solutions. So,

I'm not going to give you the four secrets to a happy marriage. But what I would suggest is that you ask yourself three questions, anybody, if you married or looking to marry. First question, what very specifically am I looking for my marriage to do, for me? And am I looking to do for my spouse and what expectation did she have, right. These are a lot of things. If you start listing them, you'll be a little shocked at how many things you're asking for.

Two, in light of those things, what are the resources you're investing, time, psychological energy, willingness to be -- have sex when you may not feel like it, there is a bunch of different things that you might want to think of resources you invest in the marriage. Are you investing enough to meet those needs? If so, bully for you; you're probably already at the top. But if not, you have two choices. Number one, start finding ways to increase the amount you're investing in the marriage so that you can get up to the expectations; or number two, alter your expectations in a way that brings them down to the resources that you're willing to invest.

And if you're one of the people -- many of us are -- who have a discrepancy between what you'd like the marriage to be doing for you, what it's actually doing for you, I really encourage you to try to calibrate those things because as we know, having a marriage that aligns in that way is likely to yield a great deal of deep satisfaction with both, with your life and also for your spouse's life. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. GILBERT: I was enjoying that talk so much until at the point where Eli was talking about the impossibility of modern marriage, my wife was next to me going, yes, yes --

(Laughter)

MR. GILBERT: -- giving us all something to think about. What a pleasure for me to introduce our final speaker, and then after that we have a little time.

All our speakers will come back and will have some interaction with all of you.

Our final speaker today is Jen Senior. Jen is the only one among us who is not a scientist and therefore is probably the person most familiar to you. She is a contributing editor to *New York Magazine* and you know her as the person who profiles Bill Clinton and Antonin Scalia. You know her as the person you see on "Morning Joe" and "Hard Ball." But I know her because maybe a decade ago, she came to interview me about a book I'd written on happiness.

My experience with journalists is usually they come to me for an education. Jen already had an education. She came to me for a debate. It turns out that Jen is, in my personal opinion, the best social science writer in the United States. And her book "All Joy and No Fun" is a beautiful, beautiful, short summary of the literature on children and happiness, and she has become, in my view, the world's expert on this topic. We're glad to have her. Please come up and join us.

(Applause)

MS. SENIOR: As the nonacademic here, I'm the least proficient with the clicker, so we'll how this goes. Thank you for that ultra-menschy introduction. I'll forgive you because you've also ruined my opening, because here's how I was going to start, which was to say that 10 years ago --

(Laughter)

MS. SENIOR: -- when I was assigned one of my first social science tours for *New York Magazine*, I was doing my research for it and along the way, I picked up a book by this Boston based psychologist I had never heard of, Dan Gilbert. And it was a great book and toward the end, it mentioned almost in an extended kind of parenthetical that one of the most robust findings in social science is that kids do not improve their parents' happiness one iota. If anything, they compromise it. And when I read this, I was stunned because, of course, all I

wanted at that moment in time was a kid, that was all I was thinking about, and I would have written about this right then and there were it not for the fact that I was convinced there would be this enormous credibility gap between me and my readers if I wrote this as a non-parent.

So, I had a kid --

(Laughter)

MS. SENIOR: -- and I decided it was time to look into this data and sure enough, it is a very robust part of literature. It stretches back more than 50 years. It started with this paper called "Parenthood and its Crisis." It was published in 1957, which if you think about it is kind of interesting because, of course, that was a moment of like peak veneration of the nuclear family in American life. It was very audacious for the author to write it; he got a lot of blow back for it. He paid the consequences.

What he argued was that contrary to conventional wisdom, children did not actually strengthen marriages, but weakened them. And he doubled down on his argument on page one by quoting a representative mom -- this is a woman who was in the study -- who said, we knew where babies came from, but we didn't know what they were like.

(Laughter)

MS. SENIOR: And by the way, those are his (inaudible); they're not mine. Those are 58-year-old (inaudible). But the most famous contemporary study that documents parental discontent was done by Daniel Kahneman, and this is one crowd for whom I probably don't even need to tell you who he is, but just briefly, Princeton psychologist. He won a Nobel Prize for more or less inventing the field of behavioral economics. He and his colleagues did something very, very simple in 2004. They surveyed 909 working women from Texas and asked them to do two things. They had said, number one, please say what they did the day before; and number two, say how they were feeling as they were doing it.

And lo and behold, at the end when they had tallied all the results, it turned out that child care ranked 16 out of 19 in pleasurable, which no one expected. It became the unanticipated headline of the study. It overtook all the other findings. So things that women said that they preferred, things that clocked in higher included vacuuming --

(Laughter)

MS. SENIOR: -- which is to say house work clocked in higher. Also napping, which is to say that losing consciousness entirely was considered preferable to spending time with their children.

(Laughter)

MS. SENIOR: So, what do we make of these studies, right? Yes, okay. So, of course, some things about children are going to be irreducibly difficult. You will not sleep for quite some time, that's true. You will find yourself trapped in absurdist loops of conversation and negotiation with small creatures whose prefrontal cortexes are about as ripe as a green banana and that will be frustrating and that will compromise your affect too, of course, of course, of course, short.

On the other hand, we know that kids are great, right. They're fabulous. I mean they are responsible for these unrivaled moments of joy that we have in our lives. They give you this vectored sense of purpose, this reason to get out of bed. By the way parents are less likely to take their lives than non-parents; that matters. They fill you with this wild and almost psychotic sense of love and pride, right. So here's what I'm going to stipulate. I'm going to stipulate that kids are not the problem. I'm going to stipulate that something about parenting right now at this moment is the problem, and that something about my parenthood is -- parenting has really, really changed.

So for now, I'm just going to isolate three ways in which I think it's changed that might actually account for this kind of deeply counterintuitive data. I'm going

to start with choice. Sounds very obvious, but I think it's worth flashing out. So in Plymouth Colony -- again we have double references to Pilgrims, and by the way your Pilgrims are much better, my old-timing Pilgrims were terrible. So I'm terrible at PowerPoint, that was what could fit. So in Plymouth Colony, there were eight kids per family. In 1850, there were five, and today there were only two, just two. So, imagine how much value we assign to these two kids, right? This is just the basic principal of economic scarcity speaking. We assign a higher value to those things that are rare.

Now, in addition to having fewer children, we are also deferring having them, right? So, today if you are a college-educated woman, odds are you're going to have your first baby at 30.3 years old and if you are in a straight relationship, your spouse is going -- or your partner is going to be 32.3. So kids today are kind of the equivalent of what marriage was in a Jane Austen novel, right? They are the capstone to a life. They are this thing that you fantasize about, this glorious end goal that you're hurdling toward.

So again, imagine how much significance you are attaching to this experience when you finally have it. So, it could be that one of the reasons that the data says this is simply that we expect an awful lot out of parenting right now and maybe we expect too much. So, that's one possibility. Okay. So, the second change to parenting that I want to talk about is we work differently, right. And I can talk forever. There are a million different ways that we work differently, which are going to have consequences for how we parent and how we experience parenthood.

For now, I'm just going to focus on one, and that's that women do it, that's it. Today -- sorry. Today, four in ten mothers are either the primary or sole breadwinners in their homes. So let me just repeat that; 41 percent of us make most of, if not, all of the dough. And you would think, given how common this arrangement is, that our culture would be well-adjusted to it, you would think. And we, in fact, are not; we are deeply, deeply ambivalent about it, and if you want a sense of just how

neurotically contradictory our views are on this subject, I'm going to give you a pair of statistics from Pew that I think tell you all that you kind of need to know. Okay. And they were done only one year apart, 2012 and 2013; so they're very recent.

The first is that 79 percent of Americans reject the idea that women should return to their traditional roles. So, that's good, right? I mean we should have options, terrific, great. Number two, and this is one year later in 2013; 51 percent of Americans say that children are better off if a mother is at home and doesn't hold a job. So, go ahead, reconcile these two numbers. You can't do it. On the one hand, women should have choices aplenty; on the other hand if they exercise the right to use those options, then they're imperiling their children psychologically, right.

So, I think because these are unresolvable, this might actually explain why mothers in all these studies about 60 years' worth, mothers almost always come out less happy than fathers. They are consumed, beseeched by guilt. So what do they do to swage it? Well, not only are we spending almost record hours at the office, today we are also spending record numbers of hours with our kids in compensation. We are now at the point where we are spending more time with our kids than moms did in the 1960s when most of them didn't work. And when I tell this to people -- or outside the home, I should -- it's work, no matter what you're doing, but -- and when I tell this to people, they are often very skeptical. They can't understand how the ledgers could possibly add up; it makes no sense.

But if you look at the American time use survey data, it's very, very clear what's going on. So, back in the '60s, you had to keep an impeccable home; your floors had to be buffed to a high shine. There could be no more ring around the collar, you had to make scrumptious and perfect meals, but you put your kids in playpens and if they're old enough to ride a bike, you told them to get on it and not to come home until 6:00 o'clock when you bang the gong and it was dinner time, and that was that, right.

So, now cut to today, and look at the American time use survey data and what do you see? Well, this is what's clear. None of us can cook and our houses are filthy.

(Laughter)

MS. SENIOR: But we're all going to work and we're all spending a ton of time with our kids. And by the way just as a P.S., this change is reflected in our language. So back in the '60s, if you stayed at home with your kid, what were you called? A housewife or a homemaker, emphasis on the word "house" or "home," you had to keep a perfect house. Today if you stay home with your kid, what are you? Because you got to be a perfect mother, emphasis on the word "mother," that's right, exactly.

So right now, I would say that we are all in the business of intensive mothering. We are spending more time with our kids than we ever had. We are also still doing -- this is moms -- we are still doing twice as much child care as fathers. Now this would not necessarily a problem per se, because men still do more paperwork than women do. So, theoretically again, the ledgers should look even here. The problem is that the type of child care that we do as women is very, very different, and so we experience our time differently, which again, I think, explains mom's distress in these studies. So, first of all moms, even in dual-earner families get up three times as much in the middle of the night with their kids. That's in dual-earner families. It's six times if they don't, and I don't feel like I have to rehearse the literature of sleep deprivation here to tell you that that is a mental health disaster waiting to happen, right. So that's the first thing.

The second thing is that we have deadlines set at work, right? We're doing things on deadline. The bath has to be run at 6:00 o'clock and the homework has to be done by 8:00 o'clock, and they've got to eat dinner. So, home is not a haven for women. It's just another place where the short clock is running, right?

And then the third thing is that women in general multitask more than men about 10 extra hours a week and almost all of that multitasking is done in the home. So again, what that means is that home is not a haven. It's a place of keen discombobulation and time fragmentation. So, I think this might explain why leisure time, if moms can somehow miraculously managed to locate some while they're at home, does nothing to bring their cortisone levels down, and I mean nothing; it has no effect. It does for men. It does not for women.

But I don't know if anyone here wants to take a guess about what does bring women's cortisone levels down, because people at UCLA have been looking at this. They have been getting people to spit into vials and testing their cortisone levels, and they can tell you what makes women relax when they're at home, if anyone wants to guess.

SPEAKER: Meditation.

MS. SENIOR: That probably does work. They weren't videoing you or probably, why -- being with other -- I'm going to have to look it out. Okay. Well, here's the thing that -- seeing their husbands do chores around the house.

(Laughter)

MS. SENIOR: One quick caveat on this, it was a small sample size. It has not been duplicated. I look forward to the day that it's done and triplicated with thousands of people, but it was too good not to share. So, take it, you know, not with one grain of salt, but, you know, it's not yet there. Okay. So, anyway, all right. So the fact that we have, you know, a lot of choice, the fact that we work differently, those are two big changes that I think we're all contending with.

And the third -- and it's sort of neglected as an explanation, but I think really important, and I'll be brief. The role of the child has really changed. I mean, it used to be -- and we don't think about this -- this is a historical explanation that Dovetail NYC, some of the

stuff that Elli was saying. So, once upon a time, children worked, right? I mean they worked on our farms, they worked in factories, they worked in mills, they worked in mines, they worked in the street trade. Kids were economic assets to their families.

Sorry, it was only during the progressive era that we finally put an end to child labor, but even in 1940, 1940, I mean that's not that long ago, half of all teenage boys dropped out of school, they went to work. So, really it was only after World War II that that kind of sheltered, education-focused childhood as we know it came into existence, and I just want to be very clear for everybody here. I am very happy we banned child labor; I think it was a positive development. I am, in no way pining for the Dickensian days of yore when kids were working, but I just want to point out that once kids stopped working, the economics of parenting really changed, right.

And in the words of one of my favorite sociologists of all time, she's very unsentimental, she pointed out that kids went from, they became economically worthless, but -- I'm sorry, economically worthless, but emotionally priceless, right. They were no longer contributing to the family till; instead they were taking from it. And throughout the 1950s and '60s, that was okay. It worked because income inequality was at record lows in the United States, but by the '70s wages were stagnating, by the '90s the world was globalizing and pretty soon it wasn't enough just to shelter and educate our kids. Suddenly, we had to raise a species of super child just to make sure that our kids had a toehold in the shrinking middle class.

So, the irony is today, kids are working again. The difference is today soccer practice is their new work. Violin lessons, that's their new work. College calc in 10th grade, that's their new work. And I don't know maybe it benefits them; I know though that it does not benefit their family the way that it did in the days of old. It costs the family. It tires the family. It drains the family. Who's driving them to the soccer practice, who's paying for the violin lessons and, let's face it, probably

doing it with them because it's Suzuki. We are, right, it's us.

So, I just want to point that as a historical proposition, this is brand new. There is nothing reciprocal about our relationship with our children anymore. And in a very short period of time, kids have gone from being our employees to being our bosses, and that can make a difference. That could explain the data. That's it.

(Applause)

MR. GILBERT: Terrific, thanks. Thanks to all of our speakers. We'll take a moment. We will assemble on stage and then I will turn them over to you. Working mic, working mic. Well, that was a treat. I've heard every one of this people talk about every one of these topics before, and I still learn something new. Pleasure is mysterious; materialism is troubling; marriage is difficult; and children are surprising. This should be news to every one of us, because every one of these speakers told us that are normal everyday intuitions about the four things that matter most are remarkable flawed.

I'm sure everybody here has something you want to ask. Do we have microphones going around? Microphones going around. Please raise your hand if you have a question for anyone up here.

SPEAKER: Hi. I am a professor at a medical school and I work a lot with residents and fellows, and as you know, more than 50 percent of them are women. I can't tell you how many times I'm asked the question by the female doctors when should I have kids, should I have them while I'm in training, which might mean extending that a year, or two, or three, or should I wait until my career starts? Jen, what would you advice them? Or just let nature do its thing?

MS. SENIOR: Yeah, I -- it's a legitimate question and I hate answering it. Because, of course, everybody's situation is completely dyssynchronic, right, and there is a part of me that thinks, earlier is better,

you're already en route to -- we already know that you're working, you're in a stable profession, you're going to have a certain kind of stable income. Medicine is a nice field to go into; these are lucky people who get to think about that question. So, that's -- who get to make this choice.

Part of me wonders whether it wouldn't simply be less of a shock if they were, you know, doing things as they went along, but I'm not on the advice business, you know, giving business. I mean I think I can tell you what a lot of graphs say. There is really -- there is a very impressive graph that sort of shows that if you have kids before 30, you're compromising your income, but I think in no case -- I mean that difference for women is really extreme, you know, that like you're income horizon is just worse if you start earlier. But I think in your particular case, whatever works. I don't think there is a right answer to that, you know.

MR. GILBERT: Jen, can I just follow up on that? I mean it seems to me that from your book and from some of what you've said, it would not have been unreasonable if your answer to the young woman, who said when I should I have kids, is never. Why is the answer not never? Why is it --

MS. SENIOR: Because his stipulation is that they want kids. I'm not going to tell him no. I mean I like kids, I want people to have kids if they want kids. I wanted a kid. I love kids.

MR. GILBERT: I'm trying lure you into telling us there is something other than happiness?

MS. SENIOR: No, well, here is the thing. I mean I can say that, right, there is another way to frame all these, which is to say happiness might be the wrong question with kids. You know, we live for what's on our epitaph, right. I mean, you know, we want to lead meaningful lives and, you know, there is a part of me, no doubt that melancholic Jewish part that thinks like happy snappy, who cares about happy, you know. The part that matters is whether something is meaningful, you know.

But, and of course there are a million ways to find meaning apart from having children. But I am assuming that if they're asking it's because they want them, and I think that's grand.

MR. GILBERT: Well, I'm handing you the microphone because we've debated about this so many times. I know you want to speak.

MR. BLOOM: Yeah. So I'm going to play straight man to Dan's -- let him respond to this, but I really agree what was just said, which is that I study pleasure, but I think there is a lot more life than pleasure. But, I think it's a poorly done life if we just seek our pleasure, ultimately self-defeating. I also think happiness is overrated. I mean happiness is terrific, but there are other higher-level goals and I think one of the interesting paradoxes is, and people here to speak about this, is the best way to be happy is to give up trying, seek out higher goals. I don't often quote Freud, but he's famously known for saying the two important things of life are love and work, fulfilling romantic relationships and satisfying pursuits. Work on those; happiness will solve itself.

MR. GILBERT: Great. Roving microphone. I know we have questions in the front. Do we just have one mic coming around, just find somebody with their hand up and give them the microphone.

SPEAKER: In this new world of parents giving everything to their kids and shuttling them to all the -- you know, soccer practices and everything and making sure they get into the better schools, have you seen any research where there is a distinction between disciplinary problems that the kids up to they have, rolling their eyes, you know, and not being respectful to their parents versus, you know, 40 years ago, where you wouldn't think about, you know, saying something against, you know, to your father or mother.

MR. GILBERT: I think that's yours, Jen.

MS. SENIOR: Yeah, it is me, all right. There

is always -- I'm not really in the calamity howler camp. I mean I think my generation, now Gen X -- I'm 45 -- I mean we were supposed to be hopeless. We were the people who are going to live in group houses in perpetuity, we were in on a rider in Ethan Hawke and we were never going to get our act together, and we were never going to figure out how to do anything, and we did. You know and people found us plenty coddled.

And in the 1950s, there were hearings about the pernicious effects by the judiciary committee, the central judiciary committee about the terribly deleterious effect of comic books, that they were going to destroy American youth, that they were all going to become a bunch of, like, you know, create this awful, you know, non-law abiding people, and they turned out okay. You know, and I think that yes, this generation, we've sort of wrapped them in styrofoam, peanuts and bubble wrap, and we're hovering over them, and guess what. I'm guessing that they are going to find a way out.

And right now there is a whole family of books that have come out on this subject, most recently by Julie Lythcott-Haims. She used to be a dean at Stanford. She just wrote a book called "How to Raise an Adult," and it's all about, you know, how kids are showing up at Stanford's doorstep under-constructed. You know, I'm not sure I buy it. Laurence Steinberg is sitting in his office -- sitting in this audience, right here. He wrote a great book about adolescence called "The Age of Opportunity." And his argument is, kids keep going until they're 25, this is not the worst thing in the world. You know, I mean, he's got -- I wish he had the mic, but anyway. There are countervailing points of view on this, just saying. I wouldn't freak out.

MR. FINKEL: One quick addition there is what are the issues that, I think, we face as parents, but also as spouses and so forth, anybody who is trying to help the personal development or goal achievement of somebody else -- and most of us do this for lots of different people -- is there is an extremely delicate balance into how you should go about doing that. It's almost certain that helicopter parenting is too much, right? Because, I

think, the right wing has this right.

You can actually overdo it and make kids not feel responsible for themselves, for cleaning up after themselves and so forth, and by college they should be learning those skills. But you can also mess it up with the other direction, right? So, it's a really complex balancing act in terms of how much you should support your loved one, say, for example, your children, while simultaneously being sure not to over-support. And that is something that I think we haven't really figured out as a society is to what degree should we be watching while our children fall down, staying at the side and watching them get back up and dust themselves off and dry their own tears, and what are the circumstances under which we need to step in there and really support our children, by the way also our spouses, also our friends, et cetera. And I think that the science hasn't yet caught up to the complexity of that issue.

MS. SENIOR: Right. What we can agree that Betty Draper is probably not ideal as your mother and neither is -- and the tiger mom is like the other paw, and somewhere in the middle, sanity lie.

MR. FINKEL: Yes.

MS. SENIOR: Yeah.

MR. FINKEL: Somewhere in the middle.

MR. GILBERT: Betty Draper is my mother. I can't call on you. Somebody has to hand you a microphone. Whoever gets one, there we go. Yes.

SPEAKER: This is a question for Tim. I love your story. I love your punch line that the more materialistic we become, we become less happy, we become less giving, less generous. I love the idea that the causal arrows go that way. So, I'm asking you give me some -- you know, give me some reasons to continue to believe that it's not that the folk who are more unhappy are just searching desperately for happiness and turning to material things; the folk who are already more self-

absorbed are like, what can I do for me and how do we know that, oh, the way for me to be happy is to forsake material goods, that the causal arrow is that way rather than the other?

MR. KASSER: Well, first, I would say that the causal arrow flows both ways. Okay, so, we have evidence that when people come from histories where their needs have been psychologically threatened, that increases the likelihood that they orient towards materialistic values as a way to cope with that unhappiness, that deep kind of emptiness that they have inside of them. Unfortunately, like one-night stands and cutting yourself and getting drunk, it's not a very good strategy for dealing with that unhappiness even though it's good for the economy. So, you know, we -- so, you have to, you know -- so, I don't deny the other causal arrow is what I want to say, to begin.

On the other hand, there is evidence which does suggest that materialism does promote higher level or lower levels of wellbeing. It's difficult to experimentally do that because it's ethically questionable to try to make people more materialistic, right. But nonetheless, I'll tell you just about a couple of studies. There are studies that show that if you momentarily activate materialism in people's minds by, for example, showing them luxury goods or having them unscramble sentences that have to do with money versus some control item, that just the momentary and oftentimes unconscious activation and materialism in people's minds makes them at least temporarily less happy and also makes them at least temporarily more likely to act in a selfish instead of a generous way.

So, we can experimentally manipulate it there. I'll also share that there is a study that we did; it was published last year where we randomly assigned children and their parents to either a control group or to three three-hour sessions of this financial planning program that's called "Share Save Spend" where we talked to them about advertising, we talked about sharing and saving your money instead of always spending your money, et cetera. And we measured their materialism and their wellbeing

before the program, a couple of months after the program ended, and then again, nine months after the program ended, and what we found was that it -- that first, the program worked.

It actually decreased people's materialism and it stayed low materialism over time, but the children who entered the study with high levels of materialism and got the program, their self-esteem went up overtime, which is unusual at this age group, actually. The children who entered the study high-end materialism and did not get the program their self-esteem went down overtime, okay. So, that's some experimental evidence which point to the idea that it's actually the pursuit of materialism which undermines these needs and then result in low wellbeing. More research needed though.

SPEAKER: Thank you. Actually, I have two questions, if possible, one for Tim and one for Eli. They're quick. One, so, Tim, when I was listening -- thank you for your very interesting presentation. When I was listening to it, I got the impression that you equated financial success to materialism. First of all, I want to make sure that I understood this -- let me finish -- correctly or incorrectly. And secondly, you know, when I think about financial success, especially in the United States, which is the most philanthropic nation in the world, many people with financial success are very community-oriented and give back to their communities in large ways. So, how does that all come together?

MR. KASSER: Yeah, by no means am I talking about financial success. I'm talking about the desire for financial success, okay. So, you can be wealthy and think oh, I've got enough. You can be wealthy and think, I need more and more, more. You can be poor and think, I don't have enough. And you can be poor and think, I'm okay, all right. So, the issue of wealth is how much I have; the issue of materialism is how much I desire, okay. And really what I was focusing on and what my research is focused on is this issue of desire and what the research shows, by the way, is that even after you control for people's actual wealth, there still remains a negative relationship between people's materialism and their

wellbeing, okay. So, materialism isn't too good whether you're rich or poor for your wellbeing.

MR. FINKEL: Take a message, don't care at all about whether you get any wealth, but make a lot of money.

(Laughter)

SPEAKER: On one of those charts, you had spirituality at the top, yet nobody talked about it and I'm just wondering what role that plays in terms of happiness.

MR. KASSER: Sure, thank you. Yeah, so, he is referring to that circumplex chart, okay, and due north was spirituality, due south was heathenism, okay. And so, I would say, you know, heathenism is Saturday night and spirituality is Sunday morning. You know, so it shows that relative conflict that we have there. There is evidence that -- so going back to the degrees of opposition, spirituality, very clearly, is in relative tension with financial success aspirations, okay. And there is some research actually that shows that momentarily thinking about spiritual issues in your own life can deflect you away from materialism, okay. So, I do think that spirituality is, in many cases, a nice solution for avoiding materialism and moving towards a healthier set of values, if you will, that is likely to bring more wellbeing.

In terms of in our research -- and this is all unpublished, I want to note -- we've never found a strong and consistent correlation between spirituality values and wellbeing. It's neither negative nor is it positive, and I think then it kind of goes back to her question in some ways and the broader literature on spirituality. Some people are really using spirituality as a way to cover up their inner emptiness. And it might be helping in that respect, but it's not really giving them the happiness perhaps yet. Other people might really be using spirituality for kind of contributing to the community and higher levels of growth, and that could be bringing them happiness, but those two effects sort of wash each other out is my best explanation of that sort of non-

correlation, but that's the best evidence I have, not about religion and happiness, but about how much I care about spirituality and happiness. Looks like Paul wants to say something.

MR. BLOOM: Well, just another thing which hasn't been mentioned is religion; it's sort of separate from spirituality. And if, I don't know Robert Putnam is here, but he's done some wonderful work on showing that in America, religious people are a lot happier. And that you know, as a hardcore atheist, I have to live with that. But his argument is it's because of what other people have spoken about, which is that religious -- to be religious in America is to have a good reliable, robust, social group. And to be atheist in America is to be a despised minority, absent of a lot of the social context, and if you factor that away, the effects of religion are absent.

MR. GILBERT: Yeah, that's right.

SPEAKER: Could you talk about the effect of having pets or grandchildren -- they'd be two separate questions.

(Laughter)

MR. GILBERT: Okay, who here knows about pets or grandchildren?

MR. BLOOM: You.

MS. SENIOR: You know grandchildren.

MR. GILBERT: I have grandchildren, I have no pets, but who knows of -- about data on them, anybody? No. Data on grandchildren, yeah.

MR. KASSER: I do think there are data that show that pets lower stress levels. I'm pretty confident about that. In terms of whether or not they promote -- and, you know, I always distinguish between, you know, there's being unhappy or avoiding unhappiness and being happy, right. I think that pets probably can do a lot in that respect, maybe help us avoid unhappiness. Whether they

are going to bring happiness, I am unaware of any data about that.

MR. GILBERT: As far as grandchildren go, Mark Twain's line was probably right when he said, grandchildren are wonderful; too damn bad you have to have kids to get them.

MR. FINKEL: I just want to add on the -- like I'm basically sure that my cortisone -- my stress level never spikes quite as high as when I wake up in the morning totally blurry-eyed and I stepped on my cat's puke.

(Laughter)

MR. GILBERT: Okay, do we have a microphone?

MS. SENIOR: I can pass it.

MR. GILBERT: Ah, the gentleman at the back has a microphone.

SPEAKER: This is a question for Paul. In all the material pursuits that people may have, wanting a picture, wanting these things, does your research ever show that they suddenly don't want them anymore or they don't have the same value other than the forgery? You buy the yacht, you buy the car, that pleasure just goes away very quickly?

MR. BLOOM: So, one of the major findings in the psychology of happiness and pleasure is habituation, we get used to things. I think one of the morals of pleasure research and the finding that the pleasure we get some -- from something reflects our depth of appreciation and understanding, provides a way out of it, which is that one way to not get bored with your pleasures is to learn more about them, to understand about them, to dive deeper. You're going to get bored with wine if all you do is to chuck it down. But if you learn about wine and try different wines, you'll appreciate them and will give you access to greater sorts of -- sources of pleasure.

So, I think the response to getting bored with things and getting habituated is diving deeper, and building a deeper understanding and a deeper appreciation.

MS. SENIOR: I can say one thing about grandkids. Just, all right, just what -- no. What George Vaillant once said to me, which is that they are like non-calorie chocolate; they're all upside. There's none of the, you know, anxiety. You don't have that whipping ticker tape of anxieties looping through your head all day long when you're with your grandkids. You know, they're someone else's responsibility. You just get to -- it's just joy, right. I loved that when he told me that.

MR. GILBERT: Ah, we have one -- time for one last question, gentleman with the microphone, yes.

SPEAKER: So, this is somewhat of a hypothetical but, Tim. So, we're in a ski town and let's say, you know, most people here, they could spend a thousand dollars and buy a new pair of skis, and -- or they could give a thousand -- they could still buy the pair of skis, but they could also give a thousand dollars so that 10 kids could be given equipment to be able to go, experience the mountains and go skiing. What percentage of people would you say, would, you know -- they could still, as I say, still buy their skis, but would give the additional money so that the kids could experience the skiing and, you know, how did -- how often does that happen and what percentage? So they get their materialism -- we all want good skis, but allow in the others?

MR. KASSER: Yeah. Well, first off, Elizabeth Dunn has done some great research showing that when we have money, we actually get a better happiness kick out of it if we give it away than if we spent it on something for ourselves. So, you know, I think the premise of your argument is right on. I'm being told that there's zero minute left. So the last -- the thing I would just say is that I think it's really important -- and this has been a shift in my understanding of materialism -- we're all materialistic, but we all also have intrinsic values, okay.

And the issue is how big of a slice of the pie are our values in general and in any particular moment, okay. And I think there are many things that we could do in all of our own lives that would increase the likelihood that at that moment, we stop and we think, you know, I'll buy the cheaper skis and give some of this away. I think that is available for all of us. I think that our materialistic consumer culture decreases the likelihood that that moment happens.

MR. GILBERT: The beauty of the Ideas Festival is that these aren't speakers; these are your fellow attendees. They're going to be around and they would love to talk with you. Hit on every one of them. Join me in thanking them for their wonderful presentations.

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