



The Affluenza Virus: vaccines to immunize against the Christmas consumer blues

Manifesto Challenge: Fostering Resilient Communities

Speakers **Oliver James**
Psychologist

Chaired by: **Amelia Hill**
Culture and Society Correspondent, *The Observer*

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NB

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Paul Crake: Good evening, I'm the RSA's programme director. It's my pleasure to welcome you to the Great Room for this evening's lecture by Oliver James on *The Affluenza Virus*.

This evening's lecture will be streamed live online on the RSA's website, like most of our lectures now, but unlike most of our lectures this one, the audio file and the transcript for this one won't appear in a week or so's time, you're going to have to wait until January for that to happen and there are reasons related to Oliver's publishing contract which determine that, I'll tell you a little bit more about the publishing side of things in a commercial at the end of this evening.

This evening is also being filmed by our friends at Teachers' Television, which is what the television cameras are about; there'll be a little bit of extra lighting possibly later during the Q and A, I hope you don't find that too intrusive.

My job now is just to introduce our Chair for this evening and I'm delighted to welcome Amelia Hill, who is the Culture and Society correspondent of *The Observer*. Amelia joined *The Observer* from *Scotland on Sunday* in the year 2000, and as well as covering lifestyle and trendsetting issues, she specialises in investigating high profile but secretive institutions, so far not including the RSA, but focused on the criminal courts, the family courts and the youth courts and also the Metropolitan Police. She recently wrote and presented a Panorama investigation into rape.

Would you please join me in welcoming in Oliver James and Amelia Hill.

Amelia Hill: Thank you. Well I'm not quite sure how much introduction somebody like Oliver James needs, but as a whip-crack-away run through his impressive CV, he began life as an academic in social anthropology and clinical psychology.

In 1982, he entered TV for the first time with a programme on childcare for the under-5s for Granada; he went on to break new ice with the BAFTA award winning interview-based programme, *Room 113*, where he was interviewer and producer for 44 different, extraordinarily frank interviews.

In 1992, he scored another coup by presenting a programme on rape for the BBC2 *Crime and Punishment* season, where he filmed a meeting of a rapist and a rape victim.

In 1997 he produced and presented *The Chair*, a seven-part interview programme in which he famously made Peter Mandelson cry.

He's produced three books, one on *Juvenile Violence*, one on *Britain on the Couch* – why we're unhappier now than the 1950s, despite being richer – and the bestselling *They Fuck You Up: How to Survive Family Life*.

He's a prolific print and radio journalist for everyone from *The Sun*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Observer*, as well as TV and a radio pundit. He also advises the government, well when Jack Straw was Home Secretary, and now the Tories, on 'blue-skies' thinking. He is Oliver James.

Oliver James: Is it OK if I stay right here? As you can hear from my voice I've got a slight chest infection, so I'm just hoping that my voice keeps going all the way through and I don't

end up being speechless, and I hope I don't render you speechless in time for the questions either, by what I have to say!

I want to really start by slightly, before really getting on to 'affluenza', I just want to set the full context of my argument, and in a sense my talk this evening is going to be on the fundamental causes of mental illness.

And as some of you may already know, my starting point on that subject goes back to Philip Larkin, and you can't be reminded often enough of Philip Larkin's wise words:

They fuck you up, your mum and dad
They may not mean to, but they do

They fill you with the faults they had

And add some extra just for you

But they were fucked up in their turn

By fools in old-style hats and coats

Who half the time were soppy-stern
and half at one another's throats

Man hands on misery to man

It deepens like a coastal shelf

Get out as early as you can

And don't have any kids yourself

It was pointed out to me, which I've never noticed before, by somebody at Bloomsbury that the last two lines are an extremely clever double entendre, so if you do get out as early as you can during sex, you won't have any kids yourself!

That starting point, as always, seemed to me very important because

it explains individual difference, but it doesn't, actually, if you think carefully about the words of Larkin's poem: it's actually ambiguous as to whether he is saying it's nature or nurture that fucks you up.

I mean it could be that he's talking, and I don't know enough about Larkin's history to know whether what he actually did think about this, but it's certainly ambiguous as to whether the genes are passed down to you, they fuck you up because they pass their genes down to you, or whether what I suppose is a widely assumed view, which is that they fuck you up by their terrible maltreatment of you.

But my starting point for any discussion of fundamental causes of mental illness has to be genes, and I want to just very briefly update those of you who aren't aware of the latest evidence regarding the genetic causes of mental illness.

To start with, as I think I showed in *They F*** You Up*, if you take the main source of evidence there is on the impact of genes, on why two siblings from the same family are different from each other, namely studies of identical twins, contrary to what is often claimed, they don't actually show that it's a bit of both.

"It's a bit of both" is a line that probably I would guess most of this audience, who are pretty highly educated and knowledgeable and probably have given a bit of thought to it, you would probably most of you say, "Well, it's a bit of both," and you'd look at your children and you'd explain to me why you think so.

To which I would retort, well actually, first of all the evidence

doesn't show that. The evidence shows that in the vast majority of traits, whether you're talking about personality, cognition, or psychopathology, actually it's not a bit of both, most cases it's either nil, for example, there are plenty of studies, very surprisingly, there are plenty of studies of homosexuality, there's been a huge study in Australia of gay men, 2000 gay men identical twins, absolutely nil genetic influence found in that study.

There are plenty of studies that find no influence of genes at all and many, many, many others, which are frequently cited, where it's not mentioned that they have come up with maybe 20% or 30% heritability.

So, it's only when you get to the extreme mental illnesses and the exceptional case of IQ, that you get to the 'bit of both', where you actually do get a 50% heritability for schizophrenia between studies and even higher, 60% for bi-polar disorder, Stephen Fry's claimed new illness.

My point is then that even if you accept the twin studies, "a bit of both" doesn't completely stand up, and remember we're talking here about individual differences, we're talking about within a population, why individuals differ.

Anyway, twin studies are unreliable. If you don't believe me, you should read J Joseph's book *The Gene Illusion*, which gives it to you chapter and verse why, and I'm not going to bore you this evening. God knows how I'm going to keep you awake anyway; if I arrived here at 6 o'clock at the end of a day's work, it's going to be hard for you to stay awake however amusing I am, so I'm certainly not going down that road!

The evidence that is, I'm sure, the only evidence that we really can rely on is going to be molecular genetics studies resulting from the Human Genome Project, where it is possible to really get to the bottom of this.

Now, very interestingly in recent times, and this is in the last year, Robert Plomin, who is the main man when it comes to behavioural genetics, and others like Kenneth Kendler have admitted, you know, completely in great detail, that there are no genes for individual traits like schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder and things like that, which seem in themselves to be very rare and very peculiar and so you think there would be individual genes but they accept that there are no genes for those on the basis of human genome studies.

Although that doesn't stop yesterday's *Guardian*, I think it was, publishing a piece saying schizophrenia gene discovered, Edinburgh High Risk Project. Wait until the replication comes, that's what you need to do.

I've been sitting, reading what as I'm sure many of you have been reading, these endless bloody articles about gene for this, gene for that, gene for homosexuality we've had often enough; never gets replicated.

The only thing that is interesting in molecular genetics now has been a study that was, a very clever study done – I don't completely trust it myself, but that's just me being prejudiced – but nonetheless a study that you'd have to say is hard to argue with, done in Dunedin in New Zealand.

Avshalom Caspi's study, which is very interesting, a prospective longitudinal study of 1,000 New Zealanders and found that if you had a particular genetic variant of what's called the serotonin transporter, if you had it, what's called the short allele, then if you were maltreated, you were vastly more likely to be violent, depressed and to smoke a lot of dope.

Now if you had the long allele, you could be horrendously maltreated and not suffer any of these problems, this is what this study claimed.

So I said, "Yeah, well let's have the replication." Well, there have been seven attempts to replicate it, which have partially replicated it, although some very big problems with those replications which I won't bore you with.

But for instance, two of the replications they found that the allele variations that I've just described to you worked in the predicted fashion, but only in women, not in men. Now what do we make of that?

And of course, in fact, there have been three studies, one of them is a really big one, whereas those seven that I mentioned are all very small, which have not replicated it; in fact, have found the opposite, that if you had the short allele, you could be bugged about horribly as a child and it didn't make any difference to your outcome, the fact that you had a short allele.

So what I'm saying is molecular genetics: the jury is very much out on this. They admit themselves, Caspi et al, that it's very far from clear whether his work on the serotonin transporter really does stack up.

They're backing off right, left, and centre: Eric Taylor at the Maudsley on ADHD, you name it, they're backing off and saying, "Well actually it's incredibly complicated, it's not just a single gene, it's multiple genes, it's terribly complicated," and getting into a lot of "bit of both" waffle, as a sort of back up position.

So what I'm telling you now is that as things stand, as I understand it, if you look at the evidence on molecular genetics, it's absolutely unclear whether genes, it's quite possible that genes play absolutely no part in causing mental illness whatsoever; that is still absolutely possible, I don't think it's likely to be the case, I think genes probably do play a part but at the moment we have no idea.

The other things to consider, as regards genes as a cause, are time-trends. Think about it: in 1950 there were 6,000 crimes of violence against the person recorded, before Jack Straw came along and screwed everything up by changing the way violence is recorded. 1998 was the last year that there were comparable figures, the number of crimes of violence against the person recorded by the police was 252,000.

Now of course that could be partly due to increased reporting blah, blah, blah, but hardly anybody would seriously sustain that view; hardly anybody claims that.

Even the most demented flat-earther, you know, would admit that there has been a very substantial increase in the amount of violence in our society, as there clearly has been in the amount of alcoholism and all the 'aholias' – there's a whole load of problems that never used to exist at

all, like 'shopaholia' or whatever; gambling, New Labour has individually, off it's own bat increased the amount of gambling seven-fold, good old Tessa Jowell, and is set to jack it up even more just since 2000.

So, time-trends. Another very interesting example, which I'll be coming back to a bit later, which I think is a particularly important study that everybody should be aware of and which I actually wrote about in *The Observer*, was one about 15-year-old children.

This was a study in which they measured rates of anxiety and depression and all the rest of it in 5,000 15-year-olds – that's a huge sample – in the mid-80s, and then they measured similar outcomes in 5,000 more 15-year-olds in the mid-90s.

And the fascinating thing was that (a) there was no increase in depression or anxiety amongst boys, nor were boys in any way more worried about school than they have been, boys still couldn't give a shit about exams basically, I'm very glad to say, and there was no crisis of masculinity, something that *The Observer* magazine, I remember vividly two or three years ago, it had a completely hocus-pocus, spurious edition devoted to the crisis in masculinity, a crisis which I don't personally think exists at all.

However, there was a massive crisis in upper middle class girls, social class 1 and 2 girls, 24% of whom in the mid-80s were already depressed or anxious, and this has risen to 38%. Over one-third of your daughters, because you are the upper middle classes, were suffering from depression and anxiety.

And the reasons? Well, they were obsessed with school

performance and exam performance and not how pretty they were but their bodies, and they were also not very happy with their homes lives.

Now that is an example of something that could not possibly have anything to do with genes whatsoever. A massive change in rates of mental illness and also nicely sort of against common sense in a way, because all of us well-educated folk know that the poor are much more likely to be mentally ill than the rich, so we're told.

Well, here's an example of one cohort, of one category of citizens where that's not true, because the 15-year-old girls from social classes 4 and 5 were doing fine. In fact, I very much come to the conclusion that this is the best time in the history of the world to be a social class 4 or 5 15-year-old girl, they're having a whale of a time compared to their ancestors, but their richer sisters are not.

But my point is it can't be due to genes.

Finally, the thing that is the absolute clincher for me about the insignificance of genes, which I've only recently been aware of because of the work I've been doing for the book I've been writing, is cross-national trends, cross-national prevalences of mental illness.

Now, obviously, that's a hugely problematic area if you don't use exactly the same methods to address that the World Health Organisation have done and yet, you know, psychiatrists are not much use at anything apart from this... quite useful as pharmacists if you're having a psychotic episode, but they're

essentially an extension of the pharmaceutical industry.

But the other thing that they are good for, and they really are good at this, is measuring mental illness. My dad was a psychoanalyst who actually trained as a doctor and psychiatrist at the Maudsley, way back in the 40s, and he always used to regale me with how hysterically funny it was because there were absolutely no treatments then, that they spent their whole time measuring things; they measured.

The great thing was diagnosis, and then they would diagnose the person and say: "You suffer from a sub-clinical atomised ongoing personality disorder with atypical features."

And the person would say "Great, OK, now what's the answer?"

"No, we don't know how to do anything about it, but we've decided what you're on."

Well they are good at that and the WHO study has so far reported for 15 nations. Now there are massive differences, six-fold differences in rates of mental illness around the world and this study can be trusted. They've gone to great lengths to make sure that, you know, taking into account the way that different countries interpret words.

And you can rely on this stuff, unlike, say, the stuff that Richard Layard makes such a fuss of and I've been a member of the Happiness Forum, I know all about Richard and his stuff, but Richard's been completely sold a pup on the happiness evidence, it's so superficial.

The thing I will say to these psychiatrists is they do know how to sit somebody down for an hour and a half

and come to a conclusion about whether they're bonkers or not!

So, you know, you've got to say something like a six-fold difference between by far the most bonkers society on earth, America, where in the USA, 26.4% of Americans have suffered from a mental illness in the last 12 months. 4.7% of people in Shanghai have. Similarly, I think it's the same proportion in Nigeria.

Massive difference, couldn't be anything to do with genes, and we know it couldn't be to do with genes because if you compare rates of mental illness in mainland Europe with America again, you know, remember that most Americans originate from Europe, you get much lower rates in mainland Europe. So they've got the same genetic pool but with very different mental illness.

Now that is by way of quite a lengthy preface to try and persuade you that if we're interested in the fundamental causes of mental illness, we need to think very hard every time anybody mentions genes, my advice to you is to look long and hard at what's being said here, and is it really a replicated study, is it really true?

And that includes, of course, if you yourself are suffering from problems and a psychiatrist starts telling you it's in your family and therefore it must be genetic. It's not logical; if it's in your family it could just as well be because your parents have fucked you up by the way they brought you up.

And indeed I'm not going to bore you with all the evidence about the ways in which parents do, through their behaviour, fuck their children up. Suffice it to say that if you look at the

evidence, and it is a huge body of evidence, the earlier you were maltreated, the more severely you were maltreated, the more likely you are to suffer from mental illnesses in later life.

That includes now very sophisticated evidence about the ways in which your electrochemistry is influenced by the care you receive where you're small, so that your cortisol levels, even the size of bits of your brain such as the hippocampal region of your brain, or the amygdala, those things.

If you're a woman and you were sexually abused as a child, on average you have 5% less of your hippocampal region of your brain. The younger you were abused, the more closely related the person who abused you i.e. if it's a family member, the more of your hippocampus is missing.

Slowly, the evidence is coming along that therapy can in fact reverse those things, it's a thermostat that's set by these experiences, but the thermostats can be changed. It's not easy, it's bloody difficult frankly, it's incredibly difficult, but it is possible.

And the other thing I would also draw your attention to is John Reid's work, another New Zealander funnily enough, who had a whole edition of *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, which I'm sure is all your favourite reading, but is actually a very distinguished psychiatric journal, which was devoted to showing that schizophrenia is, beyond peradventure, caused in a very significant proportion of cases – and manic depression – by childhood sexual or physical abuse; at least 50%.

However, that's sort of ancient history, it's not really what you've come here to listen to me bang on about.

What I'm going to talk about primarily is 'affluenza', but I reminded you of the unimportance of genes and I've also reminded you of the importance of early childhood care. And in explaining to you 'affluenza', I'm going to weigh, you know, roam wide and far in my scientific as well as geographical locations.

'Affluenza' I define as placing... I define it, in fact Tim Kasser's book *A High Price of Materialism*, which is a fantastically good book, nice and short, a very clear summary of the solid scientific evidence that I am about to regale you with, he calls it 'materialism', I call it 'affluenza' for the sake of capturing people's attention.

'Affluenza' I'm calling it, placing a high value on money, possessions, appearances, by which I mean physical, obviously, but also social appearances like social status sort of thing – Alain talks about it, Alain de Botton was talking about what I talked about in *Britain on the Couch* – and fame.

Placing a high value on those four things – money, possessions, appearances and fame – that's what I'm saying is 'affluenza', and what Tim Kasser and colleagues have found in samples in fourteen different countries is that if you measure people's level of materialism, or 'affluenza', and you correlate it with their mental health, you find the people who are afflicted by materialism are more likely, statistically significantly, to suffer from depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and narcissistic personality disorder, if

you know what I mean by that: me, me, me, probably the thing that poor old Stephen suffers from, Stephen Fry, and not to mention many other people in the public eye.

Now, why then would it be... before I get on to why, just think about what I've said: that's an amazing body of evidence that, it's fascinating that nobody's... I haven't heard of it in the newspapers anywhere.

You read about the bloody schizophrenia study in *The Guardian* yesterday, but have you read the latest, you know, every time a new study comes out showing that materialism does your head in, funnily enough I've seen nothing about it in the papers at all; these studies that I'm telling you about, it's very unlikely any of you will have heard of them before, and yet, you know, it's clearly a major cause of mental illness. Why?

Well, I'm not going to go into too much detail but the short answer is, according to Tim Kasser and Richard Ryan – you could actually, if you want to chase this stuff up that I'm talking about, a good website where you can actually see the scientific papers and download them on pdfs, it's called 'Selfdeterminationtheory', all one word.

If you pump that into Google it will give you access to an absolute cornucopia of really fascinating stuff, and for many of you here who work in personnel or work in business, there's some very, very interesting stuff.

They've applied it to business settings, and just to give you a taster, for instance, there's one paper you'll find in there which quotes 132 studies, a review paper published in *The Scientific Journal* showing that offering rewards and praise is highly ineffective as a

motivator, which those of you who work in business are going to find very hard to believe, but there's no doubt it's true.

Anyway, why does it make you bonkers, disturb you, to be materialistic?

Well, Tim Kasser and co present a whole lot of evidence to suggest that it's, firstly, because we have a fundamental need to feel secure, and if you're a materialist it makes you much more likely to feel insecure, you're always feeling that you haven't got enough of whatever material goal or motive that you're after, so I'm not attractive enough, I'm not rich enough, whatever; insecurity.

Secondly, if you're a materialist you're much more likely to not be plugged into communities, not to have intimates; to feel lonely, to put it very simply.

Materialists, you know, we read about them every day of the week if you read the tabloids, the loneliness that so many very successful people, David Blunkett most recently, and of course fascinatingly, many of the people at the top of New Labour who have placed material ambitions far ahead of everything else and it leaves you feeling very disconnected from other people.

Thirdly, it leaves you feeling ineffective. We have a fundamental need to feel effective and if you're plugged into this, what's often called the 'hedonic treadmill', it's very difficult to feel effective because you never achieve enough, your best is never good enough, you're never satisfied, and however hard you try, it's always your fault in this schema, in

this frame of mind, so you've just got to try even harder and work even harder, but yet you always feel as if you're never quite there, you always feel you're failing.

And then finally, we have an absolutely fundamental need for authenticity and autonomy, and those needs are very badly impaired by the pursuit of material goals.

I would also add to that 'playfulness', which Tim Kasser doesn't talk about, but I'm very much an apostle, if you like, of Donald Winnicott and his work and he's not easy to read I admit, but his book *Playing and Reality*, if you can get your head around it, it gives a very important account I think of a whole dimension of experience which is very sadly lacking in modern life.

To put it another way, the way that Eric Fromm famously did, if you're a materialist, and he put it way back in the 50s, he wrote two hugely important books but the most important was *The Sane Society*, 1955, and in that book he pre-figured R D Lang by 20 years in saying that we live in a crazy society and you'd have to be mad to be well-adjusted to it.

How true that is: being well-adjusted to this society is very, very difficult to do and not be feeling pretty screwed up.

And Fromm also, of course, famously wrote a book called *To Have or to Be*, and in many ways I think that the best way to summarise the impact of materialism is that it encourages you to put 'having' before 'being'; the pursuit of wants – confected by advertisers to a very large degree and by the wider society, the media – putting wants before needs.

Our needs are really very few and simple, the four ones that I listed: security, community and intimacy, to feel effective, and authenticity and autonomy.

To have those needs met you do not need a lot of money, and the studies show quite clearly that you really don't need more than around about £20,000 a year, really, to meet your needs in this society.

But how many people here would be happy to try and meet their needs on £20,000 a year? You wouldn't be, and that's because you're confusing your needs with your wants.

Please don't get the impression that I'm talking from a position of somebody who has managed to totally cure myself of this problem because, of course, I suffer from it too.

The manifestations of the confusion of needs with wants, you can easily think of them for yourselves: think about your housing, think about the houses you live in, the conservatories that you think about building on to them; the kitchen, are we going to do the kitchen? Are we going to change the kitchen? We're precisely on that one at the moment ourselves. Maybe, we could afford to chuck the mortgage up and move somewhere else blah, blah, blah, it's all very familiar stuff.

But actually, if you really get down to it, if you really get into this, the vast majority of the people I'm talking to here today will be living in perfectly good houses, probably in fact houses that are way beyond your real means and in fact you could trade in your existing house, probably this audience, and buy somewhere

much cheaper in a less fashionable place and take an enormous amount of pressure off yourselves.

The property market is an absolutely crucial driver of the incredibly screwed-up materialist society that we live in.

Another simple example is the exam obsession that now dominates us. I mentioned that study of 15-year-olds because I think it's so poignant. It so happens that the mid-80s and the mid-90s, that was the period in which women, girls, overtook boys in the GCSEs.

They started off, in the mid-80s, as having about the same GCSE results, I think it was equal. As every fool knows, girls are now outperforming boys massively. But at what price?

Another very simple confusion of wants with needs, which I discovered on my travels, was that between beauty and attractiveness; it's a very interesting distinction.

I found, going round the world investigating 'affluenza', and I went to New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, Shanghai, Moscow, Denmark, Copenhagen and New York and I spent three weeks in each of those cities – thanks to the British Council lining me up with people to interview – I interviewed over 40-odd people in each place, fascinating differences in the attitudes of the women to their appearance in Moscow and Copenhagen, on the one hand, and the English-speaking nations on the other.

In English-speaking nations the women are very pre-occupied, in their *Sex in the City* sort of way, with appearances; they want to appear sexy and they want to seem, if they're

a mother they want to do everything they can to have the skin and body of their nubile teenage daughter.

In Moscow and in Copenhagen it's a completely different story, although a different story in each of those places, so that in Copenhagen the women there, yes they're preoccupied with how they look but they really do concern themselves with whether they're pleasing to the person that they see in the mirror; they're not interested in trying to put other women down by the way they appear, which I'm afraid English-speaking women are to a frightening extent, and they're not interested in trying to get every man who meets them to want to have sex with them by their appearance.

What they're interested in is, it's all a matter of taste, but they are mostly interested in wearing natural looking clothes, they don't wear tight clothes at all, even the teenagers don't wear miniskirts very much. It's quite bizarre, I mean, they're really very, very different from English-speaking women.

You go to Moscow and by Muscovite standards the Copenhagen women are about two stone overweight. They, the Copenhagen women, what is regarded as beautiful there is definitely, they're quite happy to have a bit of a tummy on them, and what's more they're quite happy to wear those cropped tops and show their tummy; it's really extraordinary by Anglo-Saxon English-speaking tendencies.

In Moscow, the women are unbelievably beautiful – by English-speaking standards they are incredibly sexy – but that is definitely

not, I mean I talked to them in some detail in quite large numbers, and I promise you it's true that they really are not interested (a) in competing with each other, that's not why they're doing it, and (b) they're not interested in trying to get every man to want to sleep with them, although it's hard to believe given what they look like.

And when you really talk to them about it, you see they haven't got shop chains, the thing that they have in common, Moscow and Copenhagen, is that they're not the sort of Next fashion, that stuff doesn't dominate those cities at all.

The women often make their own clothes. In Moscow they buy, partly because they're not that rich but also because there aren't any chains, retail chains yet, fashion retail chains, so they actually buy, they do buy obviously clothes, but they adapt them a great deal to their own individual taste and what they're interested in is whether they're pleasing the person in the mirror.

In a materialist society that's not how it works.

The best way I can characterise for you the trap that materialism presents in terms of psychopathology is to describe a few examples of people I met around the world.

In Sydney I met somebody called Will, who rather unusually is a multimillionaire, he actually lost it all once and has made it all again, who is also a psychiatrist.

And I spent a couple of days with him, very, very interesting. He works 18 hours a day; according to him, none of his relationships aren't part of his working life. He didn't mention his wife

or children once in all the time that we spoke.

The great issue for him, perhaps because he's a psychiatrist, is what is his diagnosis? And I think this is why he bothered to talk to me for such a long time, he was using me as a kind of sounding board. Is he subclinical bipolar disorder, or is he suffering adult ADHD? This is the question.

Very similar actually to that Stephen Fry programme, I don't know, I expect many of you did see it, in that there's this love of a label and this love of feeling, "Ah, I've discovered something, it's got a genetic cause and I can define what it is and that's great; the problem is what do I do about it? Oh well, I either take drugs or what do I do?"

Same problem for Will, he couldn't decide what the hell to do about it. What he didn't realise, I think, is that he in fact is an absolutely classic case of what Eric Fromm called the 'marketing character', and it just so happens that, of course, the 'marketing character' is not to be found in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, but it's a very distinct pathology.

And funnily enough, it was an Australian who, only back in 2000, started empirically investigating what it consists of, and Shaun Saunders showed that people who are 'marketing characters' are eager to consume; wasteful of their consumer goods and they dispose of them and replace them frequently; they have very conventional tastes and views; they're uncritical of themselves or society, they're uninsightful; they agree with statements like 'having makes me more'; they have a tendency to publicise and promote

themselves; they experience themselves as a commodity whose value is defined and determined by the opinions of others and their possessions and they see others as commodities to be manipulated.

They closely approximate, according to Shaun Saunders, in their values to the ones portrayed on television.

And indeed, when you actually read up on this, it's very, very interesting because there's a whole lot of literatures that those of you who work in personnel would find most interesting.

There's one literature on what's called the 'Machiavellian personality', which is an absolute gripper. It's all about, you know, there's a MAC Scale so you can measure how much people are MACs or not and then correlate it with all sorts of things, and a MAC, as the name suggests, is someone who is extremely manipulative and sees other people as pawns to be moved around on the chessboard.

Links up very much with another literature called the 'Ludic lover', somebody who sees sex as a game and getting the other person to have sex with you as winning and then that person is no longer of any interest to you. I've a great friend who is like that; doesn't make him happy but he does get to sleep with a lot of people!

There's another lecture on 'hypercompetitiveness', people who are fanatically obsessed with winning, and of course you will have heard of the concept of 'personality disorder', which comes in many different forms, but most recently Belinda Board did a cracking good study which showed that in the case of four personality disorders, particularly narcissistic

personality disorder, senior managers, a decent sized sample of senior managers, were more personality disordered than prisoners in Broadmoor or psychiatric patients. Think about that!

And a fundamental conclusion I've come to in the last few years has been that one of the great challenges that faces us if we're really to progress as a civilisation beyond all past civilisations would be how the hell do you get a society, which is ruled by people who understand that the way we're cared for in early life is crucial and who are not complete shits because hardly any of the people who have run our societies or who have become very successful, especially in the English-speaking world, are anything other than personality disordered, 'Machiavellian', 'marketing', blah, blah, blah.

It's a real problem and I don't know what the answer is. I'd be fascinated if anybody's got any clues as to how you do it. My best idea so far was the idea that nobody could become an MP without having spent two weeks, full-time, looking after an under-3-year-old and I think you'd find that none of our present rulers have done that!

On my travels, many of the most interesting people I interviewed, in fact the most exotic specimens of flora and fauna of materialism, were the millionaires.

In each country, I interviewed a few millionaires and needless to say the battiest of them all, you know, Will was pretty batty, but the battiest of them all was one in New York, who is a 35-year-old, he's unmarried, he used to be a heroin addict, his father

is a world famous financial figure, he's kicked the heroin and earns about 20 million a year off his own back with various wheeling and dealing schemes.

I was taken to visit him by a friend of his. We went to his one-bedroom, five-floor apartment in which he's got some interior designer just gutted the top five floors of a corner of a massive skyscraper in New York. Each floor, you know, there's one floor for dining, there's another floor for his study, etcetera.

This chap has replaced his heroin with sex addition, and he was very interesting and eloquent particularly on the subject, funnily enough, of Russian women, he's particularly interested in, but teenagers, Russian teenagers, models, 17, 18-year olds; completely sees them as objects. You wouldn't have to be a feminist to find his attitude to these women worrying. Desperately lonely chap, I actually ended up feeling sorry for him.

He was incredibly cruel to our mutual friend. Our mutual friend hadn't seen this new apartment before and caught his finger on a bit of unfinished banister that wasn't quite right and this chap Sam said, Well you should be more careful then, you know, if you cut yourself and he was really unpleasant.

He was very paranoid. He had a sort of closed-circuit system within the apartment, which meant that he could look at this little monitor, which there would be a monitor in every room, and he could see what was happening everywhere throughout, press buttons and see what was happening in every room - there was no one in this place.

He was showing it to us and there was a sort of spectral flicker appeared on it. He said: "What's that? What's

that?" So we looked and looked and we couldn't see anything and then a car went past, so of course he hardly ever comes to this apartment anyway because he's got about twenty homes around the world - he's building a bomb shelter in the Pyrenees because he's convinced that there's going to be, he might be right, but a dirty nuclear bomb is going to go off and he wants to be able to escape in his private jet to this place when the shit hits the fan - and anyway we couldn't persuade him that there was nothing wrong and it was just that a car went past, you know, he was really paranoid.

And I met these sorts of people all around the world. They were the elite of rich people, and I'm not just talking about people in financial services, I'm talking about in all sorts of different lines of work.

Politicians, I describe at some point - I can't remember where because I haven't quite finished my book but somewhere I describe a very prominent New Labour person who is not nearly as barmy as Sam or Will but he is... I should say she, is very, very preoccupied with money and completely dissatisfied despite having sat at the table and seen these amazing world events that have happened since '97.

But equally, wherever I went I also came across people like us, you know, people who, I'm assuming there aren't many multimillionaires in the audience, but people who are living in a time of unprecedented affluence who are more or less plagued by, to greater or lesser degrees, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, anxiety disorders.

And one of the things that I found particularly striking was how screwed-up, and this is something I wrote about at some length in *Britain on the Couch*, but I was surprised to find it was so true all around the world, the extent to which the relationships between the sexes are screwed-up, particularly in the English-speaking world.

I'll give you one simple example. There was a girl, 27-year-old New Zealander, who was just over from Britain. She'd spent a few years travelling all around the world, very peripatetic, finally settled with an older man in Scotland, had a child, didn't look after the child, found it very depressing, her partner looks after the child.

There she was, talking ten to the dozen, I mean hyperactive, deeply dissatisfied with her lot and convinced that if she moved back to New Zealand everything would be different.

Classic sort of geographical fallacy, if you think of the literary notion, the pathetic fallacy, the idea that, you know, the tears on the windscreen or the tears on the window described in the novel as, you know, the tears, the raindrops are the tears, well the same thing, all of us did, we think it's going to be wonderful if we go away on holiday again, as Alain's actually described very well in *The Art of Travel*, this ludicrous delusion we suffer from that if we go on holiday it'll be different and we forget the fact that we're going to be taking ourselves with us!

And to cut a long story short, this young woman was terribly nice, terribly well-meaning etcetera but, you know, she was all set to completely screw up her 3-year-old's life because here he is, her 3-year-old is being looked after by

her partner, he's effectively his mother, and that wasn't going to stop her doing a sort of moonlight skip from Britain to New Zealand with the 3-year-old and she perfectly well understood that that wasn't going to be very nice for anyone except her, and she was going to move to New Zealand and make lots of money, her mother's very rich, and she'd been a rebel up 'til now and now she was going to come back to the fold etcetera.

A story that obviously doesn't always involve moving between continents, but a story that you hear all the time in Britain, and people thinking that if they move to a different town or to a different relationship, that everything's going to be much better because they're locked into a commodified notion of themselves and the people that they're with, and because they really do believe that they should be having something much better than what they've got.

The incapacity that we have to appreciate what we've got, be it our houses, our exam results, it doesn't matter what, we are so dissatisfied with what we've got.

And the evidence is that, there's a particularly interesting study actually, I would mention in passing, on this, a study of 8,000 British mothers by Tom O'Connor, 8,000 British mothers who have had a small child and a partner, and they found that when they were interviewed a year later, the mothers who had split up were more likely to be depressed than those who were still with their partners.

Now you could say well, maybe that's not so surprising, but you might have thought that if their relationship

was really shitty then once the mothers were out of it they would be less depressed, but on the contrary: it showed that however disharmonious the relationship had been, you know, up to and including some very, very nasty relationships, in most cases, you know, statistically significantly, the mother felt no better on escaping.

And indeed being depressed could be the cause of break-ups, because if the mother was depressed during the relationship, separation was more likely.

So this woman, Debs, a 27-year-old, she had indeed suffered from depression recently and was blaming it all on the relationship, and this is a very modern problem that we've got into this idea that we should have a perfect relationship, we should have a perfect everything, and we commodify our relationships, we see them as a car that can be exchanged.

So, I've talked for long enough and thank God my voice hasn't completely gone, to give you a chance to ask some questions, but before that, what's my conclusion?

Well it won't surprise you to hear that my conclusion is that Tony Blair has definitely not been a good thing for us in this respect. In terms of materialism, New Labour has been an absolute disaster.

I recently wrote something in *The Guardian* about this, how appallingly materialistic the core New Labour people are, maybe not Brown maybe not Straw, but I've had a bit to do with quite a lot of them and I'm sorry to say they are basically yuppies, and 'Blatcher' and 'nouveau Labour', you know, have definitely not been very helpful.

I think that you, I'm sure many of you listening to me, if you're still awake, will have realised that a lot of what I'm saying knits very much into the recent report on climate and the need for us to do something about that.

It's a very interesting question, which some of you might want to discuss: what exactly is the relationship between materialism, this all-pervasive materialism, it is far greater than it has been in the past, and our problems with the climate? How do we bring about change?

You can see that what my argument is going to be. We need, if we're going to have climate change, if we're going to change our ecological policies, we need a fundamental change in our values, absolutely fundamental.

And I'll leave you with this thought, something I haven't mentioned so far: if you read Avner Offer's really very good book *The Challenge of Affluence*, Avner's actually an economist, but he argues that a fundamental problem that's come about is the economics of the domestic household economy, in which we have dual-income household economies.

We have to, if we're going to keep up with the Jones's, we have to earn a hell of a lot more money than most individuals can earn, so I've got to leave the children in a nursery because we can't afford not to. Particularly in America, where 50% of under-one-year-olds have a working mother; it's not nearly so much the case here, in fact but it still is increasingly the case.

That, I believe, is the starting point for change. The starting point for change is to start having governance that is premised on meeting the needs of small children.

And in order to do that we have to increase the status of people who look after them.

And in order to do that we have to persuade men, as well as women, to think that it really would be something that they could feel good about themselves if they were doing the care.

Where on earth does this idea come from that it's actually better to pay somebody else to look after your children, for God's sake?

And in fact most people would prefer not to have to.

This is not arguing that women should be chained back to the kitchen sink. An awful lot of women are not particularly suited to caring for their small children full-time, and an awful lot of men are.

But my principal policy argument is going to be, when my book comes out, is going to be that we should pay the average annual salary, whatever it is at any one time, to one or other parent, and it could be as much the man as the woman, to care for their under-three-year-old, because it would change the status of that activity and because sadly, we're so fucked in the head, that it's only possible for us to feel good and it's very, I'm not saying, I'm not blaming anyone here, I'm saying I suffer from it as much as anyone else, but in my own family, in the families around me, those people who decide not to have paid work and to look after their children, whether it's part-time or full-time, have no status.

They have the status less than a street sweeper, they're despised, and I think that is the most damaging feature of our modern life and I think that if we can accept, OK, so let's accept that the only thing that matters in this stupid society is money, OK, well let's start from where people are at, let's pay them to look after their own children, and then let's see and let's see if people start to think again about what really matters.

Anyway that's my particular individual bugbear. I'm sure that many of you will say, "What? You're miles off, there are many other much more important things," and I look forward to hearing what you have to say.

Amelia Hill: Thank you very much indeed, that's a lot of food for thought. I've been asked to say, because the proceedings are being recorded, when people say their questions could they stand up, announce their names and any organisation or interest they have that are relevant, keep their remarks concise, and speak clearly. So, who wants to kick off?

John Stephenson: RSA Fellow, retired. I'm wondering whether your book will address my particular issue, which is relevant to what you said about needs and wants. When I was a younger man bringing up our family, we had a small amount of income and were therefore very much looking at needs and not much at wants. Our next-door neighbours were not in the same boat. They were very wealthy, and our children played together. I now have a son who is grown up and one of his principal motivations is never ever to be without money

because of what happened to him as a child.

Oliver James: I think we might take several at a time but I think on this occasion, because it touches on something that I think is terribly important.

The scientific evidence is there for why, which I didn't go into, which is why, perhaps you have other offspring, why would one offspring from a family be materialistic and not another, or indeed you might have a whole family of wildly materialistic people, but whatever. But that key question, it is a key question and indeed the research has been done. Tim Kasser's work is fantastic stuff because he just tackles every question you want tackled and it shows quite clearly that childhood care does heavily influence which offspring become the materialists.

Now it would be very invidious to detail that care just at this moment in the light of your question, but suffice to say that the evidence is there, and if you search within yourself and your wife searches etcetera, you'd probably find that you have treated him differently from your siblings, from his offspring, other offspring, or perhaps they're all materialists, in which case you're completely damned and I'm really sorry.

But it relates to a wider point, which is of course also the case, which is, you're right on the nail, that obviously materialism is not a new phenomenon, it's a very old phenomenon.

It probably goes all the way back to the Neolithic, to 10,000 BC, to the point at which we stopped being hunter-gatherers and the point at which we start having possessions and

we start having settled agriculture and we start having surpluses and then we start keeping up with the Jones's, and then for the vast majority of history, a tiny minority of people are kind of living in Versailles or whatever, the tiny elites at the very top, all of whom are scratching each other's eyes out with luxury fever of various kinds and status anxiety through possessions, with the vast majority of the rest of the population just desperately trying to find enough to eat.

But obviously, you have to therefore distinguish as I do between relative materialism and absolute materialism.

And you in your relatively modest home, living next to your much richer people etcetera, and no doubt like so many people, of course, in developed nations, you know, there's a real struggle to get by, without having a car, you know, it's a real struggle to get by, even to get the most basic basics in this society, sadly, still whatever it is, 19% or whatever, still living on a low income.

So of course that's right, that my arguments refer to circumstances in developed nations and particularly in the sort of top two-thirds of those developed nations.

If you start getting into, yes, but what about really poor people in really poor societies, then of course they are meeting needs, they're not meeting wants, you know, you need food, you need a roof over your head etcetera.

But of course I'm talking about people like us who are miles away from that, those problems, and as to the details of what goes on within

families that creates different levels of materialism, it is, to put it very broadly and as uninvitably as possible, people, I mean look at famous people who have desperately sought fame or money or whatever; I've interviewed a great many of them as Amelia mentioned.

They're not happy bunnies and what they're doing is compensating, you know, they are clearly compensating for a feeling of powerlessness, helplessness, and not feeling loved.

And having seen the list of people who are here today, many of you will, to a certain extent, have suffered the kind of maltreatment that leads to this and I call it maltreatment in, you know, without wishing to defame all your parents, but to a certain extent, you know, most of you will have done well at school and well at university and part of the reason for that will have been because love was conditional on doing well.

It certainly was for me; it wasn't for my sisters. Not wishing to bore you with my own autobiography, but I can clearly see my own, you know, compensatory needs in my various materialistic tendencies, and I think probably all of you would be able to see it if you think about it, it doesn't take much thinking about.

And you can see if you look at your siblings and the ones, think of the ones who are truly quite laid back and just enjoy their lives. I doubt very many of you here, it's in the nature of the beast if you're at an RSA lecture and it's certainly in the nature of the beast if you're giving one, that you're not likely to be that sort of laid back person who are actually the luckiest bastards, actually they're the ones who have

really good lives and they're also the ones who really make the world go round.

I mean Winnicott had a wonderful formulation that there's about 10% of the population that keep everybody else sane and I'm firmly of that opinion that there are those people who are not remotely interested in money, possessions, fame, dominating everyone else, trying to get their ideas across and persuade everybody else they're right, like me, they're, you know they're very, very mature, I think that actually is the word, they're emotionally mature, and they're those people who are just so great they just know when people are in trouble and what kind of help they need and they're very considerate to other people, but they also look after themselves. Anyway.

Amanda Stone: I work in the international development sector and I worked in Singapore and Shanghai, and I certainly saw a lot of characteristics that I think you've described, but I didn't see much depression, so I'm just interested if you could share some of your findings.

Oliver James: I leap here with such excitement because that was one of the things that was so interesting, because three-quarters of the Singapore population are of Chinese descent, they have the same genes as the Chinese population and yet very, very different marketing characters all over the place, a tremendous amount... I mean Anglo-Saxon rates of depression and anxiety. Curiously, that the studies have been done there, and curiously, the lunatics who run that place have allowed it to come into the public domain, and it's

just such a beautiful, perfect, from a social scientific point of view, case study in terms of the role, that genes are not important, so there is five times more depression and anxiety in Singapore than there is in Shanghai.

Now, having said that Shanghai is an absolute gripper if you're interested in 'affluenza' because Shanghai, as every *Guardian* reader knows, is completely in the grip of 'affluenza' at the moment and they're all demented with their love of luxury fever and all the rest of it, but yet they have the smallest ever, the lowest rate of mental illness anywhere in the world, within in the WHO 15-Nation Study. Now on earth can that be? That's a serious contradiction of my thesis.

Well, needless to say I do have an answer, and of course I talked to the leading psychiatric epidemiologist there, Professor Zhang, who said that it's not 'if', it's 'when' they'll develop the same rates of mental illness as New York. He reckons give it 20 years and it's going to be a great case study to see how long it takes.

It'll also be great in the sense that it's a very controlled, it's a very interesting experiment because by no means are they totally in the grip of selfish capitalism there.

They are in the grip of the values, they all want to be rich, but a big part of that is survival materialism, it's that they're only one generation away from having had their heads chopped off, having been chucked out to go and dig in the dirt, cultural revolution.

A lot of really horrible stuff was going on very, very recently and the young, although the younger generation didn't directly experience that, they obviously have parents who

did, and the theory that I have is that what's protecting them to some extent in the short term is Confucianism, because Confucius he say many wise things.

I personally think that Confucianism will not protect them when they get in the full grip of Americanised bullshit, but at the moment they still have a lot of very sensible thoughts going through their heads alongside the American bullshit, and slowly, I think Professor Zhang is right, those sensible thoughts will be wiped out.

On top of that they're a collectivist society because they're still a Communist nation, they still have big differences from America, two-thirds of the population of Shanghai are employed by the government; it's still got a long way to go before it is a demented market economy.

And I'll tell you another very interesting difference with Singapore and with everywhere else: all the time I was in Shanghai I did not meet a single person who'd been raised in their early years by their biological parents.

Every single person I met had been brought up by their grandmother because in the one-child-policy society, you've got, if you think about it, two grandmothers who are scratching each other's eyes out for the chance to look after a baby, their only chance at it that they're going to get, because they didn't get a shot at it when they had their child because it's just not done, you do not look after your children, it's an amazing situation, it would be seen as completely bizarre for somebody to stay at home and look after their children in China.

Now that, says I, is a very, very, important factor and very different from Singapore where they've long since developed all sorts of ghastly ways of looking after their children, and the fundamental sense of self in the Chinese children is very strong.

Those grandmothers sure as hell looked after those babies. True, around about the age of four, the most grotesque, from our point of view, you know, the children of Notting Hill who are sent to these horrendous force-feeding schools have got nothing on these schools, they're sent to something called 'The Early MBA'.

I interviewed a three-year-old who was going to an Early MBA where he was learning astronomy. I mean they are totally dementedly, I mean, having to rote-learn the most appalling crap, but they've had a good first three years, and the other thing that the scientific study shows that, despite the fact that they're appallingly maltreated by western standards in terms of all this having to learn this crap, the parents are still very loving to them, whereas in Notting Hill the parents, on the whole, actually, aren't really very loving to their children by comparison, it really is conditional on results.

If little Jimmy is going to get to Eton to has got to go through certain hoops; well so has little whatever the equivalent would be in Shanghai got to go through the hoops, but Mummy and Daddy still love him and "Your best is good enough", Confusius he say. Your best is good enough. Your best is not good enough in Notting Hill, but your best is good enough in Shanghai. Anyway...

Jocelyn Wright: Fellow of the RSA. Just a point of information. In the

happy event that your solution to materialism is taken up as public policy, would you couple the payment of the income to the parent with parenting classes, so that all children are brought up to the same standard?

Christian Goodhart: Fellow of the RSA. I'm just interested that you refer to the whole concept, under nurture, of maltreatment and abuse; don't you think there's actually a case that in fact there's been too much good treatment and laziness towards children, so it's much easier to give in to what children want, you don't treat them in a way that gives them any kind of nurture that gets them to grow up, and so we've actually created, we've fucked them up in a different kind of way?

Oliver James: Well, yes, I mean there's... my answer to both questions obviously overlaps. Yes, I think it's true that, to take a simple example my parents, for example, who were progressives, they were psychoanalysts, we lived in St John's Wood, and I was brought up in a very erratic fashion, giving me not a very good attitude to authority when I went to school and giving me all sorts of problems, but they also were terribly loving to me, so I was very confused.

I think that to a certain extent, although I find it pretty repulsive, *Supernanny* and all those bloody programmes, they irritate the hell out of me, and I think that they're by and large barking up the wrong tree, but one thing I will say for them is of course it's true that there is a huge body of evidence that if you want your child to be mentally healthy or reasonably able to function in a

normal society, or even an abnormal one like ours, that the rewards and punishments need to be consistent and there do need to be some and I think that's true.

In the '60s and '70s that went by the board and it is being reinstated, but unfortunately what's going on is that now I think what's happening a lot is that, as Avner Offer shows so convincingly, people are so invested, particularly women, of course, but men; the thing is real feminism, which we've lost sight of a long time ago, just like we lost sight of real meritocracy, we lost sight of real democracy, we lost sight of real egalitarianism, all those key ideas post-Second World War, have gone completely down the Swanee as far as I'm concerned.

You go round the world, you don't find anywhere, anything remotely resembling real meritocracy; it's the elites reproducing themselves everywhere.

Well, the modern problem with parenting is definitely that parents are so invested in their marketing characters that they really find it hard to remember just to have some fun with their children.

Children are incredibly good fun, they're such good fun, speaking as a father of small children, they're cracking. Until you've had small children you've just lived a life's hologram as far as I'm concerned.

And, you know, I think it's a terrible shame, you know, as I agree with Winnicott, you know, it's really tragic that we're all now obsessed with reading books and being told how to do it and you must have naughty steps and all this bollocks.

Actually I think that the fundamental problem is yes, of course there needs to be a reward and punishment. I do a series on the ITV's *This Morning* strand, believe it or not, where I go round the country, so I've seen this all over the place and there are all these working class families on sink estates and they've all now kind of tried the naughty step, it didn't work, etcetera.

If you actually suggest to them that they just spent some time being really nice to their children, you get the most staggering results. I mean it really is quite extraordinary to me that with just one meeting and just saying why don't you try this and it really does work.

So actually, I think the time now is yes, at least everybody is now interested in the idea that the way parents look after their children is important. The next step is to realise that behaviourism isn't the answer, rewards and punishments aren't the answer, that love is far more important than rewards and punishment.

And to go quickly to your question, policy implication, parenting classes. Parenting classes can be good I think, but like all psycho-bongo activities, they're terribly unreliable; it all depends who is doing it.

I mean an awful lot of psychoanalysis is dire, so is an awful lot of CDT, because the people who do it aren't terribly good. As is, if you think about it, all of you think of your own professions, a vast proportion of the people actually just aren't very good at what they do.

Unfortunately, in the case of a shrink, if you go to see a shrink it's rather important whether they're any

good, and the same with parenting classes.

Now I mean to what extent you can sort of as Richard Layard claims, you can train 10,000 CDT councillors and have your 250 centres and get everybody seeing life through the rose-tinted popular positive illusions that he seems to want us all to do; no thank you.

And likewise with parenting classes, I'd be very, very cautious about parenting classes if it was all about discipline, but parenting classes which were about, you know, what I actually think is the key to the whole thing, is not so much teaching parents to discipline their children, what's really important is that most young women have been brought up to be Bridget Jones, so not surprisingly, when they have a child they get a hell of a shock, and if they don't go on having their career, that's what their status is all built on and that's what they've been trained up to do, often by mothers who didn't have a career, who have really seriously poured their ambitions into their daughters. I mean men have ridiculously over-invested in their careers too.

And who does this benefit? It benefits Philip Green, who can go off with his £1.2 billion tax-free dividend that he bungs to his wife in Monte Carlo; it doesn't benefit us. If you read Avner Offer's book closely you'll see just how little it benefits us.

Yes, I would be in favour of the government definitely spending lots of money on trying to get parents to question the role that children are going to play in their life once they've had them and to look at their relationship and to see that just because you fancy someone, that is

not actually a very good basis on which to reproduce; it is not a good predictor at all of whether you're going to rub along when the shit hits the fan and the nappies come off.

You know, we're badly misled, we're not thinking about the right things and, you know, we need some parenting classes that were about that, and about to say it's just the greatest thing in the world, it's going to be the best fun you've ever had, as well as the worst kind of torture because you don't get any sleep and all the rest of it but you'll be happy doing it, you know, you'll suddenly realise that everything you've lived up till now was a nonsense compared to it.

Susan Steele: Thanks so much. I'm Susan Steele, I'm a Trustee here at the RSA and also Human Resources Director at Deloitte's. Building on your comments earlier about how praise and pay don't really motivate people in the workplace, I'd be interested in your thoughts on what businesses should be doing?

Oliver James: Well, I'm certainly no expert on this but Richard Ryan and his colleagues are and they've done a lot of work on this, and I would say go and look at the Self Determination site, which has a lot of stuff on it. But putting it very simply, they argue that, as I should think most of the people here who work in commercial organisations will know, people work best when they have intrinsic motivation; that is when the work they're doing actually interests them.

If they're doing it for the money, look at David Beckham, look at bloody Chelsea frankly, who I support - what a boring team, you know, look

at Arsenal, you know, so people who are doing it for the money, you know, Chelsea is packed with players who have to sit on the bench, they're paid £70,000 a week to do it, but they don't look like happy bunnies to me and they don't play happy football. Beckham is now a pointless individual; he's been destroyed by working for the money.

They explain this very well, they've done lots of studies in lots of organisations in lots of different nations showing how it's perfectly possible. I mean OK, there's a limit to how much you can get intrinsic pleasure from working in a call centre, OK, but even then, they argue, it is feasible.

Unknown speaker: I'm a governor at a secondary school, and to what extent do you think our education system, which is a combination of a system aimed at achievement and attaining, but also has some of the most caring individuals involved in it, to what extent does it reinforce the damage that's done or mitigate against the damage that's done by parents?

Oliver James: I think that the teaching profession as a whole in the state sector, particularly in the primary part of the state sector, is made up of absolute saints and they obviously do their very best in most cases to try and direct their pupils away from the kind of nonsense that New Labour wants them to embody, but unfortunately they're up against, as you would know as a school governor, they really are up against a very, very difficult problem, which is that they've now had several decades of governments who are only interested in creating good little consumer/producers and are not interested in producing and setting minds free in doing what education

should be doing, which is to actually create a love of scholarship and a fascination with the world and the rest of it and all the clichés that we all know about.

So I think, you know, it's very much despite rather than because of the education system that the teachers do, I'm sure, do a lot of good

New Zealand is a fascinating place in that the people there are so authentic, they're such decent, nice people, they really are cracking, slightly humourless maybe, but they, you know they really are great.

And it's extraordinary that they are great because New Labour, long before New Labour came and infected us, they had it in the '80s, they had a Labour government in the early-80s who just decided to privatise everything and tried to persuade everybody, and they're the most owned by foreign capital of any country in the world, you know, practically the air is practically owned by foreign capital, but yet they managed to go on being very, very decent, very, very nice people.

Unfortunately, they do have now high rates of mental illness, English-speaking rates of mental illness, but I think that I would use that as an analogy for the British education system, the British, the state sector, not the private sector which has turned into a joke, but in the state sector there are still a hell of a lot of teachers who are just, you know, doing their level best in virtually impossible circumstances to try and, you know, set people free rather than imprison them.

Candida Slater: A recent study in Sweden, where they have very generous and very equal benefits for childcare, has actually shown that this has impacted very badly on the position of women in society, that they lag more behind in terms of pay and advancing their careers than they do, for example, in this country and the rest of Europe and the United States. They also don't necessarily appear to have brought down their levels of stress and mental illness. Do you have any comments on that?

Oliver James: Sweden's a funny old place actually. It's not like Denmark, it's quite a sort of totalitarian state in many ways, it's so politically correct and everybody has to be very much the same, so it's a bit complicated, but I would say insofar as everybody continues to think that the only way we're going to achieve feminism is if women have equal rates of pay blah, blah, blah, so long as we continue to see that as the main criteria by which we judge the extent to which have achieved female emancipation and male emancipation, which is every bit as important as female emancipation as a part of the feminism that I call feminism, so long as we're bogged down in seeing that as the marker, I don't think things are going to progress.

I suspect that, as some of you may know I'm not a great fan of evolutionary psychology but I do think it's probably true that because women bear the child and physically it comes out of the woman, I think probably there's always going to be a slight tendency, however they're socialised, for women to want to be left holding the baby more than men.

I suspect that Catherine Hakim at LSE's got it about right, that approximately a quarter of women will always want to be full-time mothers, maybe half of women will always want to be part-time, and maybe a quarter of women will be sort of killer-drillers who want to be Cherie Blair, but I think that exactly the same would be true of men. I think that in the future that I dream of, a quarter of men will be the full-time mothers, hopefully they'll all be married to the Cherie Blair's...

Amelia Hill: OK I just want to propose thanks to Oliver for thought provoking and enjoyably controversial discussion that I'm sure will whet the appetite for his book when it comes out in January.

Paul Crake: You can now continue the discussion informally in the RSA's bar. Many of the books that Oliver has referred to this evening are available in the RSA library; one that isn't is his new book, *Affluenza*, which, as Amelia has just told you, is published in January. It will also be serialised in *The Daily Telegraph* so you obviously weren't quite quick enough there, Amelia! Would you please now finally join me in formally thanking Oliver James and also our Chair for this evening, Amelia Hill, thank you.