

Shrink Rap Radio #118, November 10, 2007, The Psychological Impact of Materialism

David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka “Dr. Dave” interviews Tim Kasser, Ph.D.
(Transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Susan Argyelan)

Excerpt: *And what we find is that, the more important that people rate those materialistic or extrinsic goals to their whole value system, actually, the less happy they are and the lower their quality of life. We’ve done dozens of studies, and other people have done studies at this point showing that the more people buy into these messages of consumer society, the less they’re satisfied with their lives, the less they report being happy, the less they report being self-actualized and feeling vital; the more depressed, anxious, etc., that they also are.*

Introduction: That was the voice of my guest, Dr. Tim Kasser. After receiving his Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Rochester, Tim Kasser accepted a position at Knox College, in Galesburg, Illinois, where he is currently an associate professor of psychology. He’s authored over 55 scientific articles and book chapters on materialism, values, goals, and quality of life, among other topics. Tim’s first book, [The High Price of Materialism](#), was published by MIT Press in 2002. His second book, co-edited with my previous guest, [Allen D. Kanner, Psychology and Consumer Culture](#), was released by the American Psychological Association in 2004. Since 2005, Tim has served as an associate editor at the [Journal of Personality and Social Psychology: Personality Processes and Individual Differences](#). He also works with activist groups that try to protect children from commercialization and that encourage a more inwardly rich lifestyle than what is offered by consumerism. Tim lives with his wife, two sons, and assorted animals in the western Illinois countryside. Now, here’s the interview.

Dr. Dave: Dr. Tim Kasser, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

Tim Kasser: Thank you. It’s a pleasure to be with you today.

Dr. Dave: Well, it’s a pleasure to have you, and I was referred to you by Dr. Allen Kanner, who I believe you know, and who I interviewed, oh, a few shows back, about the commercialization of childhood.

Kasser: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: And he suggested that you would be a great person to do a follow-up interview with because I guess some of his ideas are founded on research that you’ve done on the psychological impact of materialism. So, let me have you tell us about your work, and specifically about your research.

Kasser: Sure. Well, since the early 1990s, my colleagues and I have been interested in trying to understand what people’s values and goals are; what it is that they’re

striving for in life; and how it is that that relates to the quality of their life. So, we've developed a variety of different ways of trying to understand what's important to people in life and what their goals are, and we have different questionnaires or methods we give them. We essentially, for example, we might present them with a variety of different goals, like to have a real close relationship with my family, or a goal like to really understand my spiritual life, or a goal like to have a lot of fun. And we ask people to rate how important those goals are, and we're able to get a sense, then of how a person is trying to construct his or her life. Now, some of the goals that we ask people to rate are goals that are really relevant to the messages that people receive from consumer society. So, the three main goals that we consider, and that the research shows to be materialistic goals, are goals for making a lot of money; having a really nice image – which is usually mediated through some kind of possession – your clothes, or whatever; and then status, or popularity, which, again, oftentimes is expressed through financial or consumatory sorts of ways. And so we've been looking at that sort of package – or cluster of goals – which we sometimes call materialistic goals, or sometimes call extrinsic goals, and trying to understand how pursuing those kinds of goals influences people's lives. And what we find is that the more important that people rate those materialistic or intrinsic goals to their whole value system, actually, the *less* happy they are, and the lower their quality of life. We've done dozens of studies, and other people have done studies at this point, showing that the more people buy into these messages of consumer society, the less they're satisfied with their lives, the less they report being happy, the less they report being self-actualized and feeling vital; the more depressed, anxious, etc., that they also are. So, I think one of the things that's really important is this finding that even though consumer society tells us – and capitalism tells us – that the way to the good life is by making a lot of money and having all of these possessions, and caring about these things, unfortunately, that's a false promise. It turns out that the more you take those things on, the worse your quality of life.

Dr. Dave: Okay, yes, you write, in fact, that the more people value materialistic aspirations and goals, the less they are happy with their personal lives and the more they act in ways that are socially and ecologically damaging. And, you've already hinted at this, but maybe you could talk a little bit about what the personal costs are, what the social costs are, and then what the ecological costs are.

Kasser: You bet. When we first started the research, we were really focused primarily on the personal costs. So, in our early studies, we were looking at things like life satisfaction, or self-esteem, or depression, or anxiety, because those are the kinds of outcomes that really are just about the sole individual's happiness or well-being. And, as I mentioned, we found over and over that the more people take on these materialistic messages, the lower their well-being and the higher their ill-being. And lots of people have shown that by now, and I think it's a pretty well documented finding. And I would mention that it's been shown in kids as young as 10 and adults as old as 80. We found it in men and women; we found it in rich people and poor people; we found it in countries all over the world. So, this idea

that materialism is associated with low personal well-being is, I would say, fairly well-documented. And my book, *The High Price of Materialism*, is really about that finding, primarily...and why people are unhappy when they're materialistic. But over the last five, six years or so, other people and my colleagues and I have tried to start to look at things outside of people's own personal well-being that might be influenced by materialism, because if somebody just says, "Well, it's okay; I'll be a little bit unhappy so I can be rich..."

Dr. Dave: (laughs)

Kasser: ...well, that's their decision. But the problem is that what we found, and what others have found, is that the more materialistic people are, they actually end up treating other people in ways that negatively influence other people's well-being, and they negatively also influence the health of the earth. So, I'll tell you about a couple studies relevant to that, if you'd like.

Dr. Dave: Sure.

Kasser: So, in some of the studies which regard to social well-being, what we found was the more people take on those materialistic messages, the less they're empathic. So, the less they try to understand how other people see the world, the more likely they are to be what's called "Machiavellians." So, if you remember [Machiavelli](#), who wrote the book, *The Prince*, then basically, it's a handbook of how to obtain and keep power by manipulating other people. Well, what some research has shown is that materialistic people *are* more manipulative, are more Machiavellian in the way they treat other people, which isn't going to be very good for other people's well-being. Other research has shown that if you put people into game kinds of settings, where they can earn points by either cooperating or competing with other people, the more materialistic people are more likely to choose the competitive route, which unfortunately has negative impacts on other people. We've found that materialistic people have worse, more conflictual interpersonal relationships and also shorter interpersonal relationships. So, there's sort of a (inaudible) cluster of ways that materialistic people act which not only make themselves unhappy but which seem to make other people unhappy. And the with regard to ecological well-being, this is something that I became interested in really just a few years ago, largely out of my collaboration with [Kirk Brown](#). And what we started to do is to take a look at the ecological behavior of materialistic people. So, I don't know if you're familiar with the idea of the ecological footprint?

Dr. Dave: Yes, I think we're hearing a lot these days about the carbon footprint, for example.

Kasser: Sure, yeah, and it's a similar idea. The idea of the ecological footprint is how much of the earth's limited resources does it take in order to live your life? And that's based mostly on your food choices, on your transportation choices, and on your housing choices. And what we found in our research is that people who are

more materialistic are likely to be making the kinds of choices which lead them to have high ecological footprints, high carbon footprints. They're also likely to do things – or really, they're less likely to do things – which are good for the environment. So in one of the studies, we gave people a long list of different positive things they could do for the environment, like use plastic bags again, or recycle, or walk when they could also drive a car. Which kinds of things do you do? And we found both with children and with adults that the more materialistic people are, the less likely they are to engage in positive environmental behaviors, and the more likely they are to engage in behaviors which damage the earth. So, it's sort of a triple whammy here for materialism, in my mind. It undermines people's own happiness; it seems to work against us – sort of a civil, cohesive society – and it also is damaging the ability of the earth to sustain itself over time, and thus, the quality of life of our grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and other species.

Dr. Dave: Well, some people listening to this might have the reaction that you're somehow un-American, and I wonder if you've run into that. Because you do write that there are value and goal conflicts resulting from what you call "American corporate capitalism."

Kasser: Mm-hmm... Well, I'm an American, obviously...

Dr. Dave: (laughs)

Kasser: ...lived here all my life, and I think there is much that is great about our country. But I also think there is much that is problematic about our country. And one of the things I think is clearly problematic about our country is that we are obsessed with profit; we're obsessed with consumption; we're obsessed with making money, with economic growth, and I think that this can be seen in lots of different ways. So, for example, after September 11th, when President Bush was asked what can the average American do to help the country, he told them to go shopping! (laughs) Okay?

Dr. Dave: (laughs) Yeah.

Kasser: We always are looking for economic solutions to different kinds of problems, and we don't sign the Kyoto Accord, etc. Now, I have indeed been accused of being un-American, or I've been warned that what I'm saying could sound un-American. But I guess I view it as very American. It's about free speech, it's about using science in order to help us to figure out what the best paths are for our country to take in order to maintain safety, in order to maintain the nation, in order to maximize people's quality of life. That's what I'm interested in. And I think that the problem is that we have a nation which has been taken over largely by big corporations, and they're running the show. The show that they're running has to do with their own profit. And profit pushes out other values. That's the problem. To the extent you start to focus on these kinds of materialistic values, other things

become less important to you – like people’s quality of life, like children in poverty, like the environment, etc. And those are the things that are important. Those are the things that the founding fathers wanted us to be able to give to each other as a nation – not profit at all costs.

Dr. Dave: Well said, and you do acknowledge that there are some strong points to capitalism...

Kasser: True.

Dr. Dave: ...even while you’re criticizing it. So, before we go more into the critique, let me give you a chance to acknowledge what you see as the strong points.

Kasser: Well, I think one of the things that capitalism does well is to create wealth. I think that there’s no doubt that if you let people pursue their self-interests; and you let people pursue the chance to set up businesses around the things that they’re especially interested in; and to run their own show and not be overly dominated by governmental planning and such, that can unleash people’s creativity, it can unleash certain kinds of motivation... And there’s no doubt that the kind of capitalism we have thus far has really created immense wealth – for some people, at least.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Kasser: ...and has created a lot of different consumer products, some of which are quite nice. Has possibly created some really good technology for health care and transportation, although I’ll note that the Russians beat us into space without a capitalistic viewpoint, etc. But I guess my point is it can create wealth; it can create a lot of great opportunities for certain people to do certain things. And the problem is our particular form of capitalism. There’s different kinds of capitalism, and our particular form of capitalism has been really good at creating wealth but it’s come at some costs as well.

Dr. Dave: I think in some ways, maybe we’re like the fish swimming in water that supposedly is unaware of the water because the fish is just immersed in it. And we’re so immersed in the capitalist system, I think, that we equate it with freedom, with the freedom that we enjoy...

Kasser: Yes.

Dr. Dave: ...and you even use an acronym in some of your papers that I read – TINA, which stands for “there is no alternative.” (laughs)

Kasser: Right.

Dr. Dave: And it seems like we do have trouble envisioning an alternative to the capitalist way of life, that the general perception is, “Well, jeez – you’re asking me to give up all my stuff!”

Kasser: That’s right.

Dr. Dave: “How will I get along without all my stuff?!” (laughs)

Kasser: Well, quite well, probably, because most of the stuff we have at this point isn’t stuff we really need in order to survive and get by. And the research actually shows that over the last 50 years, as people in America have gotten more and more stuff, they haven’t gotten any happier. All the research suggests that happiness has remained stagnant over the last 50 years despite the fact that we have twice as much stuff now as we did back in the 1950s. So probably, we’ll get along just fine, actually. But the system doesn’t want us to know that, okay? Because the system is predicated on the idea that you need to keep people motivated by money; you need to keep them in a state of desire for more money and more goods because that’s what makes the wheels of the economy turn. And so it is set up in a way in order to keep people so that they remain motivated to be good members of the society. The analogy I often draw is with religion. In order for a religion to survive, it needs to convince people that if they don’t follow that religion, something bad’s going to happen to them.

Dr. Dave: Mm-hmm...

Kasser: They’re going to go to hell, or they’re going to be reincarnated at some lower level, or God’s going to punish them one way or another. And it needs to give people positive motivation to stay in the system, so you’ll get to heaven or good things will happen. It needs to do all kinds of things in order to incorporate people and make people believe that this is the best system possible. And that’s why we have a lot of wars around religion, right? Because everybody thinks their system is the best one, but you can’t have two bests. But people take on these ideas and they believe them, and they believe that this is the only solution. And the same is true of capitalism. You know, I teach a class called Alternatives to Consumerism that has probably some of the most consumer-aware students on my campus. In it – I teach at Knox College in Illinois – but last year, when I asked them to try to tell me what capitalism was, they just all stared at me blankly. They don’t, they didn’t understand *really* what capitalism is because it’s this silent thing that just infuses so much of our lives, but that we rarely are able to point to and say, “Ah! There’s the system at work.” And that’s ‘cause the system is always at work.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. So what’s the alternative? Do you have any kind of vision of either a modified capitalism or some alternative? As you point out, for most of us, it’s pretty hard to envision what the alternative might be.

Kasser: Well, see part of... And that is part of the problem, because I think that most people think, well, if you're not living this lifestyle, then there are three possible alternatives. The first is that you're like Ted Kaczynski, the [Unabomber](#); you're some crazy guy living in a shack – and nobody wants that. A second alternative is the Amish – they think, “Oh, well, there's the Amish,” but people don't really understand what the Amish are living like, although I'll note that the Amish, research studies show that the Amish are some of the happiest people in the United States – least likely to have depression, alcoholism, etc. But most people are saying, “Nah, I can't do that, either.” And then they think, oh, well it's North Korea or the former U.S.S.R., and then people say, “Well, that failed or *is* failing,” so that's not going to work, either. And that's what locks us into this TINA mindset, that there is no alternative. But there's a woman in Europe whose name I forget right now, but the alternative to TINA, she calls TATA, which is “there are thousands of alternatives.”

Dr. Dave: (laughs)

Kasser: And you know, I think to me, the issue is, that unites those alternatives, is that other values – besides profit, besides consumption – need to be injected into the economic and the social situation, into the economic and social system. So one of the things that we've found over and over again in our research is that the more people care about materialistic values, the less likely they are to care about three other values that we call intrinsic values. So those three intrinsic values are for self-acceptance and personal growth – so kind of knowing who you are, understanding yourself, liking yourself. The second one is affiliation, which is having close relationships with other people, like your family and your friends, and such like that. And then the third is what we call community feeling, which is the desire to make the broader world a better place – so not just you and your family, but people on the other end of the world, or polar bears, or homeless people, or whatever. And what we've been able to show empirically in lots of nations – and what other people have documented – is that there's this conflict between the materialistic values and those three intrinsic values; that the more people tend to focus on the materialistic values, the less they focus on those intrinsic values. In fact, there's some research nowadays that has shown that the more a nation has an economic system which is like the United States', the less its people care about those values. So [Shalom Schwartz](#) recently published a paper about that. So, the more we get infused with these heavy materialistic values, the less we care about the intrinsic values. The intrinsic values, though, are the ones that, our research shows, tend to make people happier, tend to provide social cohesion, and tend to lead to sustainability in terms of the ecology. So from my viewpoint – and that's kind of all the background, to answer your question as to what the alternatives are – the alternative is to develop a set of economic principles and to develop a set of lifestyles which are infused with intrinsic values, and which give people the opportunity to express those intrinsic values in their day-to-day life. It's really hard to do that under capitalism because of lots of different kinds of pressures. So I can give you some examples of how I see that we could do that.

Dr. Dave: Right.

Kasser: Okay?

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Kasser: So, I'm going to sort of start at the most personal, and then work my way up to the biggest, most social.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Kasser: So, at the most personal level, have you ever heard of the concept of [voluntary simplicity](#)?

Dr. Dave: I have, and I imagine most of my listeners will have heard of it.

Kasser: Okay, so it comes from a great book by a guy named Duane Elgin, called [Voluntary Simplicity](#), and the idea of voluntary simplicity is that people bag out of the high-consumer work/spend lifestyle and instead, focus on things like their own personal growth, or religion, or their family and volunteering. So we just did a study – Kirk Brown and I did a study – where we compared 200 mainstream Americans with 200 self-identified voluntary simplifiers. And what we found was that the voluntary simplifiers, compared to the mainstream Americans, were happier; they were living in a more ecologically sustainable way, even though their salaries were only about two-thirds of what the mainstream Americans' were. So here – and the reason that they were happier, and the reason that they had ecologically sustainable behavior, according to our statistical analyses – was that they were more focused, the voluntary simplifiers were more focused on the intrinsic values and less focused on the materialistic values. So here's a lifestyle, here's a set of people who've been able to say, "You know, I'm not going to participate in that society so much. I don't...that's not where my mind's at." And by doing so, they're actually happier, and they're living in a more sustainable way because they're able to enact those intrinsic values. Because they're able to have more opportunity to be involved with their family, or pursue their own personal growth, or volunteer and such like that. So, I think that's one excellent model, which is totally against the whole capitalistic, consumeristic mindset, even though consumerism has tried to co-opt it with magazines like [Real Simple](#), and such like that. I mean, that's "real simple" by buying stuff; simplicity is about really living in a more simple way. But these people are happy, so I think that simplicity is one excellent solution. I think another excellent solution is something I've been writing about lately called time affluence. In our nation, over the last 30 or 40 years, work hours have gone up about 160 hours a year. So, what that means is that the average American is working about four weeks a year more than they did 30 years ago. Compared to Europeans, we work about nine weeks per year more than the

Europeans. Like 14 weeks per year more than the Danes and the Norwegians. Fourteen weeks they have off more than we do!

Dr. Dave: Wow.

Kasser: Now, that, actually, time affluence is something that's really important for people's well-being. So we have a paper coming out in the Journal of Business Ethics showing that even after you control for how wealthy somebody is, how much time they have – their work hours – is a predictor of how happy they are. So the people with more time, they're able to spend more time doing those kinds of activities that are related to intrinsic values. They have more time for their family; they have more time to volunteer; they have more time to pursue their hobbies, and therefore, they're happier. Furthermore, there are some studies showing that, we've done some studies showing that the longer, more work hours people have, the worse their ecological behavior. So again, I think time affluence and the chance to give people more time is something which is really important. Now, that's something you can make a choice about, right? Like you can say to your boss, "Well, you know, I don't want a raise this year; I'd rather have an extra two days of vacation," or, "I'd rather take every (inaudible) two weeks of vacation," or whatever. "I'd rather take every other Friday off." But at the same time, we really need some national policies around that. So, for example, we're one of only five nations in the world that doesn't have paid leave for a woman when she gives birth to a child. Most nations in the world give a woman at least six weeks' paid leave. Cuba is actually one of the best in the world in terms of giving people time for their families. We don't give 'em anything. We're one of the few nations in the world that doesn't have a mandatory minimum vacation law. Most nations in the world, including China, for example, mandate a certain number of weeks of vacation per year, paid. There's no such law for that in the United States. And the result is – especially poor people, who are stringing together a couple jobs – don't get any vacation.

Dr. Dave: I think in a way, I think we're sort of proud of that because we get this message that we need to be very productive, and so we all have this productivity drive.

Kasser: And that goes back to that capitalistic ideology that we've incorporated and internalized. That goes back to us being the fish in the capitalistic water.

Dr. Dave: Mm-hmm...mm-hmm...

Kasser: That we've bought into this message that that's what's most important, and that's what the highest sign of a good life is going to be about.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Kasser: But that's not what the research tends to show. But I totally agree with you. I think it's ideology, but it's not *just* ideology. It's also institutional pressure. There are plenty of people out there who... So, there was a study conducted by the [Center for a New American Dream](#) that suggested that about half of Americans would be willing to take a cut in pay in order to work fewer hours. But the problem is, they live in a society where it's very difficult to actually do that because of the variety of different pressures that occur and no national-level support for that.

Dr. Dave: Mm-hmm... Now, I...

Kasser: Go ahead.

Dr. Dave: I was just going to say, when you... Well, you go ahead. It sounds like you're on a roll. (laughs)

Kasser: (laughs) If you think so! Well, I don't know if your listeners think so. (laughs) A third kind of approach that we could talk about is more at a national indicator level. So, for example, right now, our main way of determining whether or not the nation is doing well is the gross national product per capita. Right?

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Kasser: So, if GNP is growing, then things are good. If GNP is not growing, things are bad. But GNP is, all it is, is an indicator of how much economic activity is going on. So, it includes things like companies making money off of pollution and companies making money off of cleaning *up* pollution. It includes paying prison guards. Building new prisons is good for the economy. Pollution, at some level, is good for the economy. If I get in a car accident and kill somebody, at some level, that's good for the economy because somebody had to go out and buy a coffin...

Dr. Dave: Hmm.

Kasser: ...and have hospitalization charges. Driving our cars and buying a lot of gasoline is good for GNP per capita because all it is, is about economic exchange. Now, to the extent that we think that that is the be-all and end-all of what our nation should be striving for – back to Bill Clinton, “It's the economy, stupid!” – so long as we think that what's most important is economic growth – so long as we think that economic growth is best measured by GNP per capita – what we're going to do is keep creating situations in which case we do all kinds of things that might bring wealth but that work against those intrinsic goals; they work against happiness, against sustainability, etc. So, there's a variety of different possibilities out there for alternative economic indicators. So some psychologists have called for a national well-being indicator; there's a group called [Redefining Progress](#), which has publicized something called the Genuine Progress Indicator, which takes out a lot of the bad from GNP and adds in some other things. The kingdom of Bhutan, which is

a little country in the Himalayas, it doesn't use GNP; it has something called Gross National Happiness...

Dr. Dave: Hmm...

Kasser: ...which it is trying to maximize.

Dr. Dave: Wow.

Kasser: There's a group in the UK called the [New Economics Foundation](#), which has a couple of different indicators, including one called the [Happy Planet Index](#), that the Tories almost actually adopted. So, if we could get policymakers on national, local, state levels to think about these kinds of indicators, we could recognize that not all economic growth is good for the nation, and we could start to say, well, how can we maximize genuine progress? How can we maximize gross national happiness? And we would start to see that allowing corporations not to pay any taxes and to pursue profit at all costs wouldn't be the way to do that...

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Kasser: ...even though it might be the way to maximize GNP.

Dr. Dave: Well, let's talk a little bit about psychology as a profession and how it interfaces with all of this. First of all, what sort of psychologist were you trained to be? A social psychologist, or what?

Kasser: Well, nobody's actually sure, to be honest.

Dr. Dave: (laughs)

Kasser: I was (laughs) as an undergraduate, I did cognitive and health psychology. I was admitted to a clinical psychology program at the University of Rochester, but all of my funding during my years there was from social and motivational and developmental psychologists. So, I really don't consider myself to be any particular kind of psychologist. And at this point, as you can probably tell, I'm pretty informed by sociology and economics as well. So, I guess I view myself as somebody who's interested in the human situation, so I need to know about all of those things in order to make sense of them.

Dr. Dave: Yes, and when you first started to do this work, you found that there was hardly any psychological literature on the topic of capitalism, for example.

Kasser: Well, and that's still the case. So in a paper that we just published this year, we found only a handful of studies, including one of my own, that mentioned capitalism in the abstract of the paper. So capitalism – just like it's the water for the fish for all the rest of us, when the rest of us are the fish – that's definitely the case

for psychologists. We tend not to have looked, as a profession, at that more distal economic situation, which determines a lot of our behavior.

Dr. Dave: And partly, that's because it's the water we swim in, but is another part of it because it's also a sacred cow?

Kasser: I think a big part of it is that it's a sacred cow, absolutely. Psychologists want to appear very objective and apolitical, and so they... and a lot of them have internalized that same capitalist ideology that we were talking about before. And so to turn and talk about those kinds of issues, I think, is something most people don't consider doing. I also think that the fact is, psychology has actually been one of the reasons that all this has been so successful. There are thousands and thousands of psychologists with Ph.D.s out there helping make the commercials that are fed into us. There are thousands and thousands of Ph.D. psychologists figuring out ways to maximize worker productivity. So psychology has been somewhat complicit in this economic system.

Dr. Dave: I'm smarting under that because I'm involved in market research (laughs) and have been for some years, and I agree with what your saying.

Kasser: Okay.

Dr. Dave: Um...and I don't want to go, "Um..." (laughs)

Kasser: (laughs) Well, you know, not all market research is bad. There are certain things that need to get marketed to people in certain ways, and I think there's the question of *what's* being marketed.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Kasser: And there's the question of *how* it's being marketed.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Kasser: And I'm not trying to say that anybody who's ever done any market research is therefore doing something that's ultimately very problematic. But let's face it: the vast majority of what is marketed to people is not marketed in the most ethical fashion, nor is it stuff that people really need, usually.

Dr. Dave: Yep, we're on the same page in that regard. Well, you know, we could...I could really talk to you quite a bit more, but I think we're kind of beginning to run out of time here. So, I wonder if there are any last words you'd like to offer?

Kasser: One of the things that I guess I would like to just say in closing is that when you talk to a lot of people about materialism, most people will say, "Yeah, our society has become too materialistic. Yeah, corporations have too much power. Yeah, I

really don't like the way that corporations market to my children," etc. But a lot of people feel kind of hopeless about it. They feel hopeless that there can be a change.

Dr. Dave: Mm-hmm...

Kasser: And part of that is the whole TINA mentality, that they don't think there are alternatives. And part of it is because corporations do indeed have so much power, and so much of this seems like it's out of our hands. I guess what I would like to say is that it really is the case that a better world is possible here, and that there's a phrase that Martin Luther King used called a "revolution of values." And he said this in the late 1960s, that what our nation needs is a revolution of values. We need to move from a thing-oriented society to a people-oriented society. And we haven't done that. I think we've gone more and more towards the materialistic values and more and more towards the thing-oriented society. But that doesn't mean we can't. We actually do live in a democracy. We actually, you know, we could put Coca-Cola out of business tomorrow if everybody decided just to stop drinking Coca-Cola. We could put media companies out of business tomorrow if everybody just turned off their television. We actually do have an immense amount of freedom. And most people, I think, know, at some intuitive level, that what's really important are these intrinsic values. What really is important is their family. What really is important is pursuing their own personal growth. What really is important is helping the world be a better place. And that's what my studies show over and over again. And I think what we can do as psychologists and as social scientists is to say, "Okay, how can we actually move the world in that direction, given that we have the freedom to do that?" We're not in Myanmar. We're not in Russia 40 years ago. We have the freedom to make these kinds of changes if we push on, and if we think about it, and if we design the right kinds of social situations, and if we, as psychologists are willing to get involved in policy measures and to talk about these kinds of things, and to step out of the ivory tower and discuss the real world here. Because this is about the real world. So, I actually believe that as depressing as all of this is, there actually is a good deal of hope, potentially, that we can make these kinds of changes and really create something that is a mite bit better than what we have now.

Dr. Dave: Well, Dr. Tim Kasser, I want to thank you so much for being my guest today on Shrink Rap Radio.

Kasser: Well, it's been a pleasure to be with you. I've enjoyed speaking with you.