

What would you do if you got scammed?

Would you suffer in silence or would you do something about it?

Well, I got scammed once and this is the story of what I did.

I'm Justin Sales, the host of The Wedding Scammer, a true crime podcast from The Ringer,

and for seven episodes, we're hunting a calm man, a guy with a lot of aliases,

a guy who's ruined a lot of weddings, and with the help of some friends, I just might be able to catch him. Listen to The Wedding Scammer on Spotify or wherever you get your podcasts.

Today, we're taking a break from war to talk about the science of human potential

and a new book on that subject from the psychologist and best-selling author Adam Grant.

Let me set us up this way. Imagine you're a basketball coach.

Maybe it's a middle school girls' team, high school boys' team,

NBA team, doesn't matter for the purposes of this story, just choose whatever scenario

sits best with you. Let's say you have a dilemma. You have one star player,

one clearly superior basketball player, and after that, you've got a bunch of relatively similar role players in the team. You want to win the championship. What as a coach do you do with this team? Well, the smack you over the head obvious answer is that you coach the team to support the star. Of course, you do this. You're only going as far as the star will take you.

So you run a bunch of plays that lift up the star player. You do everything you can to preserve the health of the star player. You recognize correctly that the star is what is going to take you the furthest. Here's a crazy idea. The crazy idea is that you send the star player home, not for a day, not for a week, maybe for a whole month. You grab this keystone of the team and you rip it out. This seems to make no sense whatsoever. It would imply that, for example, if you really loved a basketball team, you should actively root for brief injuries to your best players. You would never do this. But in fact, there is some evidence that this is exactly what you should root for. In 2015, two researchers from the University of Florida and the Stevens Institute of Technology studied 28,000 NBA games and they noted when the best player was injured or absent from the team. And they found that when the star players missed a brief amount of time to injury or other absences, about, say, 13 games out of an NBA season, so maybe just about 20% of the season, if they missed this amount of time, the team played better overall after they returned. It was almost as if the injury to the star magically improved the team. From that paper's abstract, quote, a star's temporary absence helps the organization overcome myopia by triggering a search for new routines. When he returns or she returns, the organization may combine these new routines with pre-absence routines to improve teamwork and performance. End quote. That's a little bit of psychology abstract mumbo jumbo, but maybe as you heard that as I read it, your mind started to buzz with implications that have nothing to do with basketball. Across every company, we all know there are stars, sometimes self-appointed stars, within teams. And it might seem to the non-stars in that team to seem scary to lose them, to sickness or injury or leave. But what the study suggests is that very often, our own potential is constrained when we become reliant on the so-called star performers around us. In fact, we become our best workers, our best selves, not when we rely on comfortable routines of dependency, but rather when something surprising shocks us to be better. This is just one study that I furiously underlined and looked up from Adam's very insightful book. And today we're going to talk about human potential and the science of human potential.

[Transcript] Plain English with Derek Thompson / The Science of Achievement, With Adam Grant

Across sports, coaching, hiring, scouting, we're going to talk about why GPA isn't the best predictor of student achievement, why it's so hard to scout great quarterbacks, and what the spread of Protestantism tells us about human potential and plasticity. I'm Derek Thompson. This is plain English.

Adam Grant, welcome to the show. Thank you, Derek. I'm excited to be here.

I'm excited to have you. You've written books about these big ideas, originality, generosity, curiosity. Each book of yours, I've read not just as a story filled how-to, but also as a kind of critique of some busted conventional wisdom in our culture. Like, nice guys finish last? Nope. Changing your mind is a sign of weakness? No, that's wrong. So let's start there.

What is the cultural error? What is the busted conventional wisdom that hidden potential is responding to? I think there are two myths that I want to bust with this book broadly.

One is that natural talent is the most important driver of success and growth.

I don't believe it is, and I don't think the evidence supports that thesis.

The second is that hard work is kind of the key ingredient after natural talent, and I don't think that's what we need to unlock our hidden potential either. I think, of course, effort is important, but what ultimately matters is not so much how hard you work as how well you learn. I have a meta question about this whole concept of potential. There are a lot of stories in this book about sports, and that's great because I love sports, and I love these stories. But I'm 5'8", 150 pounds. My basketball potential is not infinitely plastic. My potential as an NFL linebacker is not a matter of near effort. Sometimes, if we're being honest, we really are bound by the outcome of genetic lottery. But also, as so many of your stories show, and as so much of the literature in psychology and developmental psychology shows, we consistently, both as individuals and as society, underrate ambition, underrate our ability to change, to improve, to become excellent at things that we used to suck at. I wonder, as someone who used to suck at diving and public speaking, who is now quite prolific at both of these things, or at least was recently ended with diving, how do you reconcile these ideas, the force of genetics, but also the possibility of improvement? I actually think that sports examples don't help us here because we're much less flexible and pliable physically than we are psychologically. So, yes, there are Steph Currys and Tom Brady's who overcome the limitations of their bodies or find ways to repurpose some of their physical strengths to maybe compensate for their deficits. But when it comes to any skill you want to learn that's not in sports, that's not dependent on basic, raw physical talent, speed, agility, strength, etc., it's much easier to mold yourself into something you're not. So, I think about this, the contrast between getting good at diving and getting good at public speaking, massively different for me. Those are two things I started out terrible at, remarkably terrible. I mean, you can watch the videos of me diving as a 13, 14-year-old. It's embarrassing. I was the worst diver on my team and it was a miracle that my coach didn't cut me. It took me years and years of pouring every ounce of my energy into diving, stretching, training on a trampoline, lifting weights to get my body to a place where I could qualify for the Junior Olympic Nationals. Even then, after six years of diving being my obsession, I get to college and I'm completely out of my league because there are people who work just as hard as me and have springs in their legs and can actually touch their toes without bending their knees easily. Contrast that with

getting better at public speaking, where I'm an introvert and I was also extremely shy and I would shake getting on stage and within a few weeks, the shaking started to dissipate and within a few months, I stopped breathing like Darth Vader all the time and it was only an occasional blip and it just really speaks to the fact that I think that the skills around how we think and how we behave are much easier to learn than the ones that often put a real ceiling on our potential as athletes. I want to blow out this idea of potential and improvement by thinking about it at the biggest possible scale. I'm interested in the concept of historical progress. You have tucked away on page 45 of this book a study that blew my mind the first time that I saw it. It is a study by Sasha Becker and Ludger Westman about the Protestant Revolution and how the Protestant Revolution changed the course of history. Get us started by telling us about this study. I'm going to make a faithful effort. It blew my mind too, honestly Derek and I love that it struck a chord with you because one of the things I've always admired about your writing is the way that you connect the micro to the macro and you dig deep into human psychology but you also show us the broader social and political forces that are shaping collective progress. This study, I feel like it was done for you in some ways. Yes. Basically, this is a pair of economists and they're interested in following up on Max Weber's insight that the Protestant Reformation essentially changed the world. The Weber argument which you know well and have written about is that what Protestants brought us, what Martin Luther gave us in the 1500s was a different work ethic that before labor was kind of a vice and now it's a virtue. You have a calling and so people are going to become these extraordinary agents of grit and discipline and perseverance and that's why the Protestant Reformation kind of fueled an industrial revolution. That's why capitalism flourished. It was thanks to the work ethic that a religion gave us and Becker investments say not so much. We're not sure that that's false but we don't think it's the only story. So they set out to track this and the way they do it is they first show that sure enough as Protestant beliefs start to sweep through different regions you can actually see economic growth follow in those regions. You can even see it at the level of a whole country but hard work was not necessarily the active ingredient there. Let me pick up the story here because I looked into the study. I looked deep into it. It's such an incredible idea. So backing up just a bit, one of Martin Luther's most important ideas was his doctrine of sola scriptura, sola only scriptura scripture, only scripture that is don't rely on the priest to build your relationship with God, rely on yourself, read the Bible for yourself and the truth is this was a ridiculous idea at the time because before the Protestant Revolution barely one percent of the German-speaking population was literate. So telling them to read the Bible was initially utterly fruitless but as towns and principalities throughout Europe adopted Protestantism literacy grew in step with religious conversion. In fact even in 1900 the most literate counties in central Europe were also the most Protestant. Now this is where I think you and the other social careful social scientists or a careful listener maybe both are going to throw up a huge red flag and the words causation and correlation will be printed in big bold letters on that flag. The question is did Protestantism cause greater literacy in education or were literate Christians just more likely to become Protestant and this is the master stroke of the study. Sorry to sort of monologue here but I find it so interesting. Protestantism started in Wittenberg and it spread from Wittenberg and the researchers find that the further

a Prussian county was from Wittenberg in 1871 the smaller the percentage of Protestants right so Prussian counties closer to ground zero of the revolution had both higher shares of Protestants and higher literacy rates. So if you think of religious conversion sort of radiating out from Wittenberg literacy seems to be radiating out as well suggesting that it is in fact this religious conversion this revolution that is causing the increase in literacy and thus ends my monologue but the reason that I wanted to go a little bit deeply into it is that I think this study is so important for anybody who is skeptical of the idea that progress can happen at the individual or social level. An idea a mind virus of soulless cryptura may have been a lever on an entire continent and maybe much of the world's ability to read and that's just amazing to me. Yeah it's remarkable and maybe to build on that the specific insight that really struck me was wait so what's happening when the Protestant Reformation takes hold is not necessarily just that the people are now called to work harder it's that in order to be good Protestants they have to learn to read because they need to learn to read the Bible. I guess in Catholicism it was common for biblical teachings to be oral but Protestants good Protestants read and that meant that entire generations learn to read and as literacy rates rose then their ability to learn rose with them. You don't just learn to read the Bible you can learn to read everything and now that you can learn to read anything you can now absorb information and learn at a faster rate and so the the big a ha I had here was that it's not necessarily the working harder effect it's a working smarter effect here and that you know I guess I guess for me like this this big movement toward Protestantism that in part may have had this side effect of teaching literacy what it actually set the stage for was for human beings to become sponges to make us better at absorbing relevant information at filtering out irrelevant information at improving our critical thinking skills by you know confronting competing arguments in you know in different sources of literature and yeah that could shape a whole country and a whole generation that that's staggering to me I want to spend the rest of our time talking about what to me feel like the two pillars of your book which is number one cultivating our own potential and number two predicting success and potential in others like scouting or hiring so let's first talk about cultivating our own potential the thing that everybody knows is that practice makes perfect like 10 000 hours yada and so forth but the truth is a practicing often sucks practicing something you're bad at is a pain in the butt it's frustrating it's often boring it's really hard you have a great story for showing a theory that I think we should hold alongside the importance of practice and it begins with a basketball coach named Brandon Payne who is Brandon Payne Brandon Payne is uh uh a basketball player who did not make it as far as he wanted to go and uh once you know he he he was a great shooter basically but he wasn't quick enough um he didn't have the endurance he didn't have the athleticism and as he puts it he did not work hard enough to get where he wanted to go so what do you do when you fail as an athlete you become a coach or a trainer and so Brandon hit his wall in college he started training and then one day he uh he took on a client who was just doubted by so many scouts uh they said that he lacked the quickness he lacked the size he lacked the strength to be a decent basketball player and Brandon started training and a couple years later his uh his trainee Steph Curry is a back-to-back MVP and one of the key lessons of your story of Brandon Payne and Steph Curry is this concept of deliberate play and this really hit me because I've seen Steph Curry's pre-game workouts and they're incredibly playful he's always doing these like circus shots or these dribbling drills that

look like something out of the Harlem Globetrotters Brandon Payne has this quote he says there's no boring in our workouts every drill is a game end quote why is this concept of deliberate play of turning practice into something a little bit more playful so powerful well I think it's important because as anyone who's ever put in long hours trying to master any skill knows practice can become a slog and there are I think two big risks that we run into when practice becomes repetitive or monotonous or just plain difficult and strenuous uh one is the obvious one burnout we all know people who have just gotten exhausted um you know burning the midnight oil or you know

just just pounding the pavement the other though that I think often happens first is bore out this is an actual term in psychology uh when you know instead of being overloaded you're under stimulated

and you just don't have the interest and the motivation so I think you know given the risk of burnout and bore out what we don't want is you know to just commit ourselves to the daily grind we want to try to turn the daily grind into a source of daily joy and the way that psychologists do this is what's with what's called deliberate play which is where you take a skill building activity and you break it down and add fun to it and that's not I do not want to suggest that we should just gamify like no I don't want a leaderboard I don't you know I don't I don't necessarily want you to be on your peloton thinking like okay you know I've got to I've got to win this race what I want is to take the actual process of doing the task and building the skill and make it enjoyable and we often do that by by introducing autonomy and variety into the way that you do it here you introduce this term that I had not heard before from the psychological literature called interleaving interleaving that is like bouncing from one activity to another so in basketball it'd be like doing a shooting drill and then a dribbling drill and then a passing drill can you connect that to something in the workplace because I can see how interleaving works for athletes that need to develop multiple discrete skills but sometimes in in the workforce people are doing individual skills that are a little bit more complex so how would interleaving as a principle apply to the modern workforce yeah I mean I will say Derek this was counterintuitive to me because I always thought you want to do reps on the same skill over and over again until you've mastered it and what the research shows is that not only is it more motivating to interleave and vary the the skill moment to moment you actually get deeper learning that way too and I think that's in part because you have time to consolidate what you're learning um it's in part because if you if you practice a skill once and then you don't pick it up for 10 minutes um you have to then retrieve it again from memory and there's a there's a consolidation effect that happens there um that that sometimes makes you better at it so interleaving is especially helpful if you're trying to work on complex skills and you can even break it down into multiple skills that are part of the same task so let's say for example you are trying to improve your public speaking this is something that I've spent a couple decades on now you've spent a lot of time on as well um and everybody has to do it um at some point in their job so my inclination like the the reps approach would be to say okay I'm trying to improve my pacing let me now do three or four talks where I work on slowing down a little bit and lowering my voice when I'm making an important point and then eventually right the audience will be entrained to that rhythm and I'll master it and then in my my next series of practice talks what I'm going to focus on is I'm going to shift to the structure of of the content and making clear that I'm signposting effectively

well what the research suggests is that I should actually go back and forth between those two things I should give one talk where I'm totally focused on structure then the next talk work on pacing and then go back to structure and that at the end of it I'm going to be better at both in the open I mentioned another of my favorite studies from your book which is the research that was done on 28 000 NBA games which showed that basketball teams often improve if their stars are briefly injured uh you point out in a very helpful footnote that there's sort of an optimal time off the average team would need its star to play about 43 games after missing 15 games

the NBA so that's about half the season what does this study tell us about the science of potential and improvement within teams well you you can see this in the NBA data and a little bit with hockey teams too where what happens when a star player gets hurt is people have to reconfigure

their roles and routines so somebody who is a peripheral player now has to be more central somebody who may have had an unrecognized strength or an unused skill now brings it into the team like suddenly suddenly you realize your center can dribble in basketball you discover that you know your your defenseman actually has a great slap shot and that that just wasn't needed when the star was was playing that role so I think the the lesson from that for all of us is that sometimes you actually need to remove your your best player in order to elevate the team and what that does is it helps you learn about the hidden potential in the other members of that team I really I really wanted to name this like the same way Bill Simmons is famous for his concept of the Ewing theory the idea that sometimes when the best player leaves a team the entire team gets permanently better I wanted if there was some way we could you know have a name for what happens when the best player goes away for a bit and then comes back and the entire team is elevated by his brief absence or her brief absence so I did a bit of thinking I don't know if you remember the 2015 NBA playoffs but Steph Curry was injured in the first round or the first few rounds of that playoffs and the MVP of the finals that year the golden state warriors ended up beating the Cleveland the Cleveland Cavaliers in the finals the MVP was not Steph Curry it was Andre Iguodala like the sixth man of the team so I wonder if this is kind of like the Iguodala effect part of part of what I've I've I've begun wondering about is is it possible that under the right circumstances the team gets better even before the star comes back so I think about what was it it must have been the early was it 80 or 81 NBA finals when Kareem got injured and Magic

Johnson basically became Kareem Abdul-Jabbar I remember his baby Skyhook and you saw a completely

different side of Magic Johnson and then I guess the other example that jumped to mind was I believe

the longest winning streak in hockey history was the Pittsburgh Penguins 92 93 season I think they won 17 games straight and if I remember correctly please fact check this but if my sports knowledge is not obsolete that was the year that Mario Lemieux was out being treated for cancer and he came back on a tear and the team was that much better that's right yeah the Lemieux effect is a pretty good name for this as well you reminded me there is a study in the literature on the science of science and I just thought of this this was not in my notes it's called does science advance one funeral at a time and the paper shows that when a famous scientist passes

away in a field like physics or biology there's often a flood of papers from outsiders in the field who had no association with that star scientist and that flood of paper from outsiders who were sidelined by the centrality of that star scientist ends up pushing the research in novel direction it's so interesting so this is like kind of weird to say but it's it's not unlike a Ewing theory but for entire scientific disciplines like the the field gets smarter with the departure of this aging star I love it when human psychology and sports is mirrored in science and I you know I wonder there's a there's a sort of more and less benevolent version of that story the less benevolent version is that the the star was get was in the way or you know had sort of aged out of the role but didn't realize it and I think the more benevolent is what you're describing which is like we've got to continue this person's legacy so reading from the paper's conclusion quote we find that publications and grants by scientists that never collaborated with the star surge within the subfield absent the star interestingly this surge is not driven by a reshuffling of leadership within the field but rather by new entrants that are drawn from outside of it end quote so you know I'm not trying to like trivialize this by like coming up with a name for everything but I don't know maybe in a way I kind of am this really is a kind of Ewing theory if you think of the entire field of science as a team the departure of the star really does push science forward by unleashing new creative approaches to old questions anyway enough enough naming stuff happening in science let's talk about predicting success in others this second pillar of your book in sports I think one of the most interesting and important questions is why it's so hard to predict the next great quarterback like here you have maybe the most important decision that any sports team in american professional sports can make who is our next quarterback and there's some very good evidence that no one is good at this no one is good at scouting quarterbacks there's a great paper by the economist david berry about how highly drafted quarterbacks do not have more ability they just get more snaps from his paper quote on a per play basis quarterbacks chosen with picks 11 through 50 as well as picks 51 through 90 outperform quarterbacks chosen in the top 10 end quote if highly drafted quarterbacks tend to have better careers overall it seems to be because they get way more opportunities from teams that have already sunk all this draft capital into them it's so interesting I mean the the idea that whatever advantage earlier drafted quarterbacks have is is more about opportunity than ability fits right in with a theme of hidden potential I hadn't seen that evidence before it also reminds me of I don't know if you've seen danny southwick's research on quarterbacks he's an ex football player who then did his doctorate with angela duckworth here at penn and what danny found was that we're we're also making a fundamental mistake in the way that we draft to begin with because we're assuming that what we're interested in is individual ability but it's actually the the match between the quarterback and the system that carries most of the variance so if I remember correctly danny found and we can fact check this with him but he found that something like two-thirds of the variance in quarterback performance was a function of the context not the individual and so you could take a bad quarterback and put him in a different team and he could become surprisingly good and we see this all the time in the nfl curt warner effect maybe brought pretty effect I think is what people would say right now there you go 49ers quarterback who half the league thinks is terrible but like leads the league in qb rating because of his weapons the offensive line sorry go right

ahead no but you can also do the reverse right so as a lions fan I was really nervous when we traded Matthew Stafford for Jared Goff not knowing how is Goff going to do in our system and it did seem like there was an adjustment and now things are going great and I have hope for the first time in 30 years since the Packers ruined Barry Sanders' career but that aside I think yeah I mean there's the whole question of how much are we actually trying to gauge individual potential in a vacuum versus what does this team need and are we actually looking for a different set of qualities yeah quarterbacks are so needy they're the most important position in sports but they're also so dependent they don't block for themselves they don't catch their own passes they rarely call their own plays and yet somehow we tell ourselves that we can definitely rank quarterbacks in a vacuum even when we only observe them in these highly interdependent conditions yeah I mean it's it's crazy it's crazy in football to to have a quarterback rating without an offensive line rating you have to adjust one by the other and the same is true in any other domain right I need to know how difficult your major was to know what your grades mean and we don't look at that okay moving from sports to education one of the studies that really stuck with me from your book is from this economist George Bowman who analyzed data of high school graduates from Florida between 1999 and 2002 and his question was do high school grades predict future success as defined by graduation rates or income and it turns out that freshman grades don't matter almost at all sophomore junior grades they matter a little bit more and senior grades reveal the most but what really foreshadows earning potential is improvement in grades between freshman and senior year if improvement in grades matters more than GPA what problem do you think this exposes in our thinking about student potential and college admissions I mean it's a massive problem grade point average is a broken metric every college admissions officer I know when looking at grades uses the average and that means your freshman grades are weighed the same way your freshman excuse me that means your freshman grades get the same weight as your sophomore grades your junior grades and your senior grades first semester the most predictive grades senior year second semester are often thrown out all together because we have to make the admissions decisions before those grades even exist I think what we should be doing is evolving from just focusing on grade point average to looking at grade point trajectory which would really get at the slope that you're talking about the the improvement over time and I think in some cases what that shows is that a student has remarkable character skills and has been able to overcome adversity and you know I think what what great basically what to put this in diving terms or figure skating terms if you prefer what what grade point average does is it only scores your execution grade point trajectory gives us a little bit of a window into the degree of difficulty that you've faced because usually when students grades improve from freshman to sophomore year or junior to senior year it's a signal that there was some kind of obstacle in their path and then they figured out how to manage it or overcome it I want to think about implications of this idea for hiring so the brief takeaway of your study

is GPT grade point trajectory is more predictive than GPA grade point average I feel like in the workforce the equivalent of GPA would be something like credentials it's so easy in the workforce to hire two credentials what would the GPT approach to hiring look like well you can you can actually do this in the context of an interview so I'm fascinated by this call center call Yachol in Israel that hires people with disabilities and one of the things they do is at the end of the interview they ask you how you think it went and then they offer you a do-over if you weren't happy with your performance so guess what you can see the trajectory from interview one to interview two and somebody who you know who shows real improvement is demonstrating both a motivation and a capacity to grow let's say a general manager of an NBA team calls you up and says hey I want you to visit our scouting team and our front office and I want you to present the implication of this book for our teams what do you tell them well if it's scouting we're talking about finding diamonds in the rough probably what I would you know it's funny I've okay so I've been in that situation what have I told them I've told I've told at least one NBA team that if I were in their shoes I would shift some of the interview questions away from you know tell me about your background just generally and toward tell me about the biggest obstacles you faced and how you navigated them and there's some research that did not make the book that speaks to a victim mentality and psychological entitlement which is essentially um that when talking about adversity like people who are not likely to show future growth are the ones who blame others for their problems and the people who are likely to continue to improve and also you know to do so even in the face of major challenges are the ones who say here's the challenge I faced and here's how I took responsibility for overcoming it you have an interesting section here about some of the implications of this research for affirmative action policies you write quote affirmative action is often a double-edged sword even for the people it is designed to serve and quote why remarkably I wrote I wrote that whole section before the supreme court decision so it's become it's become much more timely than than I intended um so basically there's there's a meta-analysis a study of studies looking at what happens when um when people are hired in an organization or admitted to a university where there's known to be an affirmative action policy yeah so basically if you're a member of an underrepresented group and your organization is known to have affirmative action um you tend to perform worse than the task or job in front of you and part of that seems to be driven by other people questioning whether you really earned your place and part of that seems to be driven by you doubting whether you really earned those that that that opportunity um and so you know I think this this really complicates policies that are designed to correct historic injustices by saying look if we're gonna if we're gonna create stigma for the very people that we're trying to open doors for and we're also going to leave other people you know questioning whether this was really fair um is that a net positive in the long run I don't know what I mean again you know I'm sort of asking you to uh is divulge to this audience what you might divulge to uh you know private audiences at nba and nfl um front offices and admissions offices across the country but let's say an admissions office comes to you they read this chapter and they confront the meta-analysis that you pointed out um that you know even for the people that affirmative action is designed to serve it can have this sort of I like how you pointed it out that it's it's sort of a double double stigma not only can self-doubt creep in but also they might be put in positions that are less likely to succeed and I think it's

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important to keep keep in mind of both of those um but if they still have this interest in equity and they still really want to identify people who seem to be in many ways like the stars of your book people who have faced adversity and have traveled the furthest from bottom of the mountain to the top of the mountain how do they incorporate that concept into their policies how essentially do they move from sort of affirm like 20th century affirmative action approach to like the gpt approach

right like like looking for potential and the ability to overcome adversity which which might yield some similar but more successful results yeah so look it's it could not be more important to find systemic ways to create opportunities for people who have been deprived of it and I don't know that there are easy answers to this question I think that you know affirmative action has benefits and it has costs um and most policies um that have upsides have unintended consequences right I'm a I'm an organizational psychologist not a policy expert so I never know what to do from a policy perspective here's here's what I can tell you that Derek I think I think one of the the mistakes of you know a lot of affirmative action policies is that they assess people by their group membership as opposed to their individual experience um and I think that what we may need

to do is to focus more on individual experiences so it's a little bit like um I would think about this a little bit like um wrestling weight classes like you wouldn't you wouldn't put a you know 120 pound wrestler uh in you know you wouldn't expect them to do well against a 300 pounder but we compare students all the time um who have had different opportunities and different advantages and so what if we had weight classes um I think the the admissions version of this is we want to compare students to their peer group on an objective level as opposed to all of the candidates so um there are a bunch of concrete ways to do this one would be um you should actually show the like the grades of their class or their major or their school um so that there's a common frame of reference um that's one way to contextualize performance another is let's show students grades

relative to their neighborhood uh so that you can see wow this is a student who really stood out in a you know in a low income area um who might not have looked remarkable if we just looked at GPA or even GPT not chat GPT um great point trajectory um and there's a there's a UK precedent for this which is um universities and we see employers doing this now too looking at specific indicators that you as a candidate have faced economic hardship uh so they'll for example look at um have you held a work study job have you gotten free meals as a signal that you've faced adversity and we've got to adjust your performance for those kinds of disadvantages and if we don't we are missing out not only on creating opportunities for people who have been denied them we're also missing out on diamonds in the rough out of grant the book is hidden potential

thank you very much honored thank you Derek
you