



WOMEN IN ACADEMIA

(Part Three)



IN-SIGHT
2014, SPRING

Issue 4.A, Idea: Women in Academia (Part Three)

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgement and Appreciation	3-7
About In-Sight	8-13
Editor-in-Chief.....	14
Academic Advisory Board.....	15-17
Letter of Appreciation	18
Dr. Carol Tavris: Social Psychologist, Writer, and Lecturer	19-24
Madeleine Thien: Writer-in-Residence (2013-2014), Simon Fraser University.....	25-33
Dr. Diane Purvey: Dean of Arts, Kwantlen Polytechnic University	34-49
Dr. Wanda Cassidy: Associate Professor, Faculty of Education; Director, Center for Education, Law and Society	50-63
Dr. Miriam Erez: Professor Emeritus, Vice Dean MBA Programs, Technion: Israel Institute of Technology.....	64-72
Dr. Adele Diamond: Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience; Professor, Psychiatry, The University of British Columbia	73-90
Dr. Susan Blackmore: Visiting Professor, University of Plymouth.....	91-105
Appendix I.....	106-107
License and Copyright	108

ABOUT IN-SIGHT

In-Sight exists as the first tri-annual international, interdisciplinary, non-peer-reviewed, non-profit, academic independent interview-based journal to ask graduate students, instructors, professors, and experts from various fields questions about their backgrounds, previous and expected research (if any), philosophical foundations, and examinations of controversial topics in their fields of expertise and inquiry, among other questions intended for great breadth and depth of responses. Additionally, it will include submissions uni-, multi-, and inter-disciplinarily and about a variety of topics from undergraduate students, graduate students, instructors, professors, and experts. We publish individual pieces throughout and full issues in the ‘spring’, ‘summer’, and ‘winter’: January 1 to May 1; May 1 to September 1; September 1 to January 1, and so on.

Open, General Acknowledgement and Appreciation

In-Sight exists because of three identifiable sectors of support: academics, contributors, and readers. Therefore, all time and effort does have identifiable people, groups, and organizations. All of whom deserve open, general acknowledgement and appreciation. Each earned acknowledgement and appreciation for single or continuous, individual or group, contribution in the construction of *In-Sight*. Many of them without mention of name contributed time and effort to the production of the journal. Some of them groups or organizations providing much needed social media and networking support. Finally, and certainly greatest, readers create the bulk of support. For every person, group, and organization involved in this project, we express deepest gratitude to all types of direct or indirect assistance from every side for contributions to this initiative.

Design and Development

In-Sight's design and development itinerary completed three of four phases circa January 1, 2014. *Phase 1* began on August 1, 2012, with the founding of ‘independent interview-based undergraduate journal’ status. *Phase 2* began with creating tri-annual status in the full year of 2013 to

increase production of material. *Phase 3* ceased the undergraduate status to upgrade the journal to ‘independent interview-based journal’ to remove strictures, both implied and actual, based on ‘undergraduate’ status. *Phase 4* will incorporate various social media to increase popular presence of *In-Sight*. In the future, more phases will develop from re-design and transformations of *In-Sight*.

General Philosophy

In academic settings, integrity exists as the foundation for knowledge, where honesty becomes necessary for integrity, especially honesty of inquiry, and honesty of inquiry goes unfettered by dogma or obfuscation – commonly called ‘academic freedom’. Meaning the ability to question anything and pursue implications of findings despite any reticence, from any harbored biases and fear of backlash, and unabashedly expressing these implications without pre-mature alteration or omission to discover knowledge. In the interviews and academic material completed and uploaded to this electronic and online journal, *In-Sight* exists to attain, at a minimum, a modicum of academic freedom mainly through an interview format.

Format, Overview

Format of the issues of *In-Sight* have specified subjects or ideas per issue. Each issue divides into an interview and submission section.

Format, Subject Issues

For interview sections of subject issues, one issue contains *only* graduate students, instructors, professors, or experts from *one* field because of emphasis on *a subject*, e.g. Psychology, English, and so on. For submission sections of subject issues, one issue accepts *only* professors, instructors, graduate students, or undergraduate students from *one* field because of emphasis on *a subject*, e.g. Psychology, English, and so on. Some exceptions of non-academic contributions acceptable with sufficient reason sent to the Editor-in-Chief.

Format, Idea Issues

For interview sections of ideas issues, one issue contains *many* graduate students, instructors, professors, or experts from *many* fields because of emphasis on *an idea*, e.g. Epistemology, Crime, and so on. For submission sections of ideas, one issue contains *many* professors, instructors, graduate students, and undergraduate students from *many* fields because of emphasis on *an idea*, e.g. Epistemology, Crime, and so on. Some exceptions of non-academic contributions acceptable with sufficient reason sent to the Editor-in-Chief.

Format, Sections ‘A’, ‘B’, and ‘C’

Titles of issues specify format for issues, e.g. ‘Issue 1, Subject: Psychology’, ‘Issue 2, Idea: Epistemology’, and so on. Interview, essay, and response sections have tags to provide requisite indication of their part in the issue. Interviews have the mark ‘A’; submissions have the mark ‘B’; responses have the mark ‘C’, e.g. ‘Issue 1.A, Subject: Psychology’, indicating only psychology interviews, ‘Issue 2.B, Idea: Arts’, indicating Arts-based submissions, ‘Issue 2.C, Idea: Arts’, indicating responses to interviews or essays.

Frequency

We publish individual pieces throughout and full issues in the ‘spring’, ‘summer’, and ‘winter’: January 1 to May 1; May 1 to September 1; September 1 to January 1, and so on. Regardless of idea or subject issues, or section ‘A’, ‘B’, or ‘C’, *In-Sight* publication dates for each month include the following: 1, 8, 15, and 22. Overall frequency depends on material quantity and completion dates.

In cases of multiple delayed publications, publication dates will change for the issue at an accelerated rate until completion of the whole issue.

Interview, Research

Depending on the interviewee, much research needs doing prior to any soliciting of an interview, which means preliminary research. If an interviewee consents to an interview, **a typical, but not absolute, minimum of one to four weeks** for comprehensive research needs doing prior to

conducting an interview. This includes purchasing and acquisition of articles, books, prior interviews, watching of video material, reading of social media material, and the synthesizing of those works to produce questions.

Interview, Consent

Interviewees either provide written or verbal consent based on an interview request. The written or verbal consent relate to the interviewee having the power to deny/accept conducting the interview, and for final decision of publication as a single interview on the website or in the full issue publication with all other issue-interviews in PDF and on the website. See 'Copyright' and 'Addendum to Copyright' for information on ownership of publications.

Interview, Conducting

Interview form depends on interviewee preference: in-person, Skype, phone call, question set, or via e-mail. Most prefer question sets provided via e-mail. Most questions mix between standardized and specialized forms. Standardized for consistency of journal format. Specialized for relevant-to-interview questions. All questions have design to elicit in-depth and full responses from interviewees.

Interview, Editing Stage One

Editing consists of the interviewees original interview with minimal editing to keep the intended meaning and message of the interviewees intact, even where certain answers may contain controversial or 'politically incorrect' statements, opinions, or information.

Interview, Editing Stage Two

The interviewer sends the interview draft back to the interviewee to confirm the originally intended meaning and message seem sustained to the satisfaction of the interviewee. If the interviewee requires any further alterations, omissions, or edits, the interviewer repeats the cycle of edit to confirmation of accuracy of message and meaning to re-edit until the interviewee evaluates the final

version of the interview as sufficiently accurate to their intended meaning and message. Any major editing consists of corrections to grammatical and/or spelling errors. This editing aims to optimize the correspondence between the interview and the interviewees intended message and meaning to the satisfaction of the interviewee.

Research Ethics

The nature of the journal does not aim to answer an overarching research question, gives interviewees full control over editing and publication, and provides readers an accurate representation of the interviewee in their own words. See ‘Addendum to Copyright’ for information on co-copyright of every contributor. Therefore, no ethics board approval necessary for the operation of *In-Sight*, especially given the detachment of both funding and constraint of publication from any institution, despite academic positions or alma maters of staff. See ‘Internal and External Funding’ for information on funding.

Internal and External Funding

Scott D. Jacobsen provides all internal funding for *In-Sight*. All internal funding includes purchasing of articles, books, chapters, prior interviews, video material, social media material, and all marketing efforts of In-Sight such as the website. In the case of external funding, only money not restricting academic freedom for *In-Sight* will have consideration. At this time, *In-Sight* operates with zero external funding.

Attachments

In-Sight’s attachments means constraints or restraints based on functioning out of institutions or groups. For instance, an institution or group would consist of a university, an agency, a think-tank, and/or an interest group of some form. *In-Sight* functions autonomously from any institution or group. This provides total freedom of content for consistency with principles of operation for academic freedom.

Advertising Policy

All advertising for the journal exists as open-access for any individual. See 'Open Access' for more information.

Open Access

In-Sight exists as open access for online contents, where any content of *In-Sight* becomes accessible for **reading or downloading** to any interested individual/group.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Scott D. Jacobsen studies at Simon Fraser University and The University of British Columbia. He works general labor in construction part-time during weekdays and weekends. He researches in multiple psychology labs working on differing sub-disciplines of psychology. Scott's core research interest is highly gifted (= / > 3-sigma) youth disadvantaged with low-income or learning deficits. If you want to contact Scott, you may inquire or comment through e-mail: **Scott.D.Jacobsen@Gmail.com**

ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD

Dr. Wayne Podrouzek works as an Instructor for the Psychology Department of University of the Fraser Valley and Head of the Psychology Department of Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Dr. Podrouzek earned his a Bachelor of Arts in Child Studies and a Bachelor of Science (Honours) from Mount Saint Vincent University, a Master of Arts from Simon Fraser University, and Ph.D. from Simon Fraser University under Dr. Bruce Whittlesea.

Dr. Daniel Bernstein works as the *Canada Research Chair in Lifespan Cognition* for the Psychology Department of Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Dr. Bernstein earned his Bachelor of Arts at the University of California, Berkeley, Master's at Brock University, PhD at Simon Fraser University, and did Post-Doctoral work at the University of Washington. His research interests lie in “Belief and memory; Developmental metacognition; Hindsight bias; Mild head injury; Sleep and dreams.”

Dr. Glen Bodner works as an Associate Professor in the Psychology Department of the University of Calgary. Dr. Bodner is a cognitive psychologist who studies factors that affect memory, including both memory accuracy and the subjective experiences associated with memory. Current research in his lab, supported by an NSERC Discovery Grant, investigates how these aspects of memory are shaped by task and context factors.

Dr. Sven van de Wetering works as an Instructor for the Psychology Department of University of the Fraser Valley. Dr. van de Wetering earned his BSc in Biology at The University of British Columbia, and Bachelors of Arts, Master of Arts, and PhD in Psychology from Simon Fraser University. His research interest lies in “conservation psychology, lay conceptions of evil, relationships between personality variables and political attitudes.”

Dr. Azra Raza, M.D. works as a Professor of Medicine and Director of the MDS Center at Columbia University in New York, N.Y. Dr. Raza completed her medical education in Pakistan, training in Internal Medicine at the University of Maryland, Franklin Square Hospital and

Georgetown/VA Medical Center in Washington, D.C. and completed her fellowship in Medical Oncology at Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, New York.

Dr. Sally Satel, M.D. is a resident scholar at AEI and the staff psychiatrist at the Oasis Clinic in Washington, D.C. Dr. Satel was an assistant professor of psychiatry at Yale University from 1988 to 1993. From 1993 to 1994 she was a Robert Wood Johnson policy fellow with the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. She has written widely in academic journals on topics in psychiatry and medicine, and has published articles on cultural aspects of medicine and science in numerous magazines and journals. Dr. Satel is author of *Drug Treatment: The Case for Coercion* (AEI Press, 1999) and *PC, M.D.: How Political Correctness Is Corrupting Medicine* (Basic Books, 2001). She is co-author of *One Nation under Therapy* (St. Martin's Press, 2005) and co-author of *The Health Disparity Myth* (AEI Press, 2006).

Dr. Hawa Abdi Diblaawe, M.D. was born in 1947 in Mogadishu. Her father was a worker in the city's port and her mother died when she was very young. As the eldest child, Hawa was forced to raise her four sisters in conditions of poverty. But she never lost hope sight of her dreams. "My father was an educated man," she recalls, "He made sure I had the chance to become a doctor." With the help of a Soviet scholarship, Hawa studied medicine in Kiev and soon became Somalia's first female gynecologist. She then completed a Law degree at the Somali National University in Mogadishu, where she later became an Assistant Professor of Medicine. She soon opened a clinic on her family's ancestral land in the Afgooye Corridor, using the profits from her family land to provide free health care to all of her countrymen.

Dr. Maryanne Garry is a Professor in Psychology at Victoria University, and the Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Research. For nearly 20 years, she has studied a puzzle of memory: how is that otherwise intelligent, rational people can remember things they never really saw, or experiences they never really had? Professor Garry's interests in applying science to the law predate her interest

in memory research or even in psychological science. Her undergraduate degrees are in Forensic Science and Chemistry. Professor Garry received her PhD in 1993 from the University of Connecticut, and did postdoctoral research at the University of Washington under the direction of Professor Elizabeth Loftus, the world's foremost researcher on human memory distortions.

Dr. Diane Purvey is the Dean of Arts at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. She is the co-editor of *Child and Family Welfare in British Columbia: A History* (Detselig Press) and, with John Belshaw, the co-author of *Private Grief, Public Mourning: The Rise of the Roadside Shrine in British Columbia* (Anvil) as well as *Vancouver Noir, 1930-1960* (Anvil). Her research interests include the history of deinstitutionalization as part of a Canada-wide project and educational leadership internationally. She is a contributor to *Vancouver Confidential* (Anvil). A homegrown Vancouverite, Diane attended the University of British Columbia (B.A., Ph.D.) and the University of Victoria (M.A.) and for several decades taught history in various BC colleges and universities.

LETTER OF APPRECIATION

For those involved in multiple aspects of the journal, it warms my heart to have the support and generosity of time spent to produce this journal, which continues to grow and develop with all types and amounts of support. Every interview participant deserves due respect and appreciation for their contribution to this project. For the purpose of the series, I leave personal research to the opening letters of issue 2.A, *Idea: Women in Academia (Part One)*, viewable in the archives of the website.

Furthermore, I express special gratitude towards Dr. Wayne Podrouzek for working overtime, serving beyond the call of educator duty, and mentoring through difficult circumstances; Dr. Sven van de Wetering for setting an example of making appropriate priorities in life and lessons in critical inquiry to even apparently 'obvious' subject matter for research; Dr. Betty Rideout for continual thoughtful answers to random questions and genuine care for my wellbeing; Dr. Daniel Bernstein for good cheer, honing my research abilities through asking good questions, and compassion in difficult circumstances; Dr. Susan Blackmore for a great lesson in appropriate scheduling and recommendations for internet links; Dr. Amy Wax at University of Pennsylvania for an important lesson in research; Dr. Mahtab Jafari on introducing more questions relating to personal emotional struggles; Dr. Carol Tavris for an important lesson in appropriate and proper referencing; Dr. Dada Adebayo for his large heart; Abbas Raza for support, and his compassionate and insightful letter; and Dr. Azra Raza for a lesson through poetry about solidarity and sympathy, and a distance and wisdom in observing life's movements. I leave you with a piece of poetry courtesy of Dr. Azra Raza (See *Appendix I* for full poem):

*Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you are destined for.
But do not hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you are old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.*

I hope you enjoy reading these interviews as much as I did working on them and with the participants.

Sincerely,
Scott D. Jacobsen
Editor-in-Chief

DR. CAROL TAVRIS

Social Psychologist, Lecturer, and Writer



Dr. Carol Tavris earned her Ph.D. in social psychology at the University of Michigan. In her career as a writer, teacher, and lecturer, she has sought to educate the public about the important contributions of psychological science and explain how pseudoscience can lead us astray at best and, at worst, cause enormous personal and social harm. Her latest book, with Elliot Aronson, is *Mistakes Were Made (But Not by Me): Why we justify foolish beliefs, bad decisions, and hurtful acts*, and has been translated into 13 foreign languages. Her other best-known books include *Anger: The misunderstood emotion*; *The Mismeasure of Woman: Why women are not the better sex*,

the inferior sex, or the opposite sex; and, with Carole Wade, two leading textbooks in introductory psychology. Dr. Tavris has taught at UCLA, and she has written hundreds of articles, essays, and book reviews on topics in psychological science for a wide array of publications, including *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Scientific American*, and the (London) *Times Literary Supplement*. Many of these have been collected in *Psychobabble and Biobunk: Using psychological science to think critically about popular psychology*. She has been invited to give distinguished lectureships, workshops, and keynote addresses to students, clinicians, psychologists, lawyers, physicians, and general audiences around the world, from New Zealand to Finland.

ABSTRACT

An interview conducted with Dr. Carol Tavris, a social psychologist, lecturer, and writer on the context of her academic positions and career; moment of interest in the field of psychology; education background; controversial topics within the field of psychology; defining of ‘pseudoscience’ and the common markers of it; meaning of recognition through various awards for a book and other contributions; significant personal influences; and the trajectory of the field of psychology.

Keywords: Dr. Carol Tavris, Psychology, pseudoscience, social psychologist, personal influences, controversial.

1. What academic positions have you held?

Although I have taught at various institutions, including the New School for Social Research in New York and UCLA, I have never held a full-time academic position. I have always loved teaching, especially the intro course, but my career has primarily been as a writer—of textbooks, general interest books, book reviews and essays, articles for journals and magazines—all with the goal of promoting critical thinking and psychological science. In a world full of pop-psych pseudoscience, that is a full-time job!

2. How did you develop that career?

When I was in graduate school, a new magazine called *Psychology Today* was born. It was meant to be the *Scientific American* of psychology—a magazine that would bring good psychological science to general audiences. I wrote to them, looking for a summer job. They told me they would hire me, but only if I came for a year. Though scared to death to take a year off the Ph.D. program, I did, and that experience changed my life. There, working with brilliant editors, I learned to write, edit, and conduct interviews.

When I went back to Michigan, I was an

Associate Editor. When I got my Ph.D., I had a choice: proceed with an academic career or go back to the magazine as a Senior Editor. The latter option was risky: no tenure or even job security, after all. But my beloved mentors at UM said, “You know, there are many ways to be a good social psychologist, and one of them is having the ability to educate the public about what social psychology is.”

3. When did psychology interest you?

Not as an undergraduate! I took one intro course and got a C+. I majored in comparative literature and sociology, and went to the University of Michigan in sociology—to study “the sociology of literature,” whatever that was. But there I found the interdisciplinary program in social psychology, and loved it. I switched into that program immediately. We learned an array of methods, topics, and perspectives.

4. Where did you acquire your education?

I was an undergraduate at Brandeis University, and a graduate student at Michigan. But I

“acquired my education” *also* first and foremost from my parents, who were committed to critical and creative thinking, and social activism; from working at general-interest magazines, which taught me the importance of using my education to help inform the public about science and critical thinking; and by coming of age during the civil-rights and women’s rights movements.

5. Since you began studying psychology, what do you consider the controversial topics?

There is always “controversy” in any field: sometimes over politically sensitive issues (e.g., sex and race differences), or over methods, or about findings. In my lifetime, the most divisive and emotional issues were the “recovered memory” and “multiple personality” hysteria of the 1990s, along with widespread claims in Canada and the U.S. of ritual sex abuse going on in daycare centers. So many lives and families were shattered by these faulty beliefs—notably, the idea that traumatic memories of sexual abuse are

repressed until “recovered” in therapy with hypnosis, dream analysis, and other methods now known to create confabulations; that trauma causes the self to “dissociate” into many personalities; that “children never lie” about being molested. These epidemics made many psychological scientists more committed than ever to educating the public about the importance of good psychological research.

That research has showed how best to interview children to avoid coercing or inducing them into telling fanciful tales, while being open to their telling about actual abuse; how “multiple personalities” can be manufactured in a collaboration between therapist and patient; and how trauma and memory really do function.

Of all my writings, I am especially partial to the popular book I wrote with Elliot Aronson, *Mistakes were made (but not by ME): Why we justify foolish beliefs, bad decisions, and hurtful acts*. In this book, we use cognitive dissonance to show why it is so hard for people to deal with controversies, once they

have taken a position: why it is so hard to say, “hmm, time to give up that outdated belief after all” or to admit that a particular choice we made might have been wrong.

6. You have devoted much of your life to criticizing work most often termed ‘pseudoscience’. How do you define pseudoscience? What do you consider its most common markers?

At least in its ideal form, science is falsifiable. A scientific premise can be *disconfirmed*; it is testable. Do you believe that dowsing and ESP exist? Do you believe that the Bible says the world will end next Friday? These are beliefs that can be tested empirically. If the test repeatedly fails, the hypothesis is wrong—you need to modify it or drop it. But pseudoscientists keep the belief despite the disconfirming evidence: “It was the wrong day for dowsing because of clouds.” The world did not end Friday? Nothing wrong with my prediction, I just read that page of the Bible incorrectly—I meant Tuesday.

7. You earned numerous awards for your book *The Mismeasure of Woman*—such as the *Distinguished Media Contribution* from the Association of Applied and Preventive Psychology, the *Heritage Publications* award from Division 35 of the American Psychological Association, and the *Distinguished Contribution to Women’s Health Award* from the APA Conference on Women’s Health. You have received other awards, as from the Independent Investigations Group of the Center for Inquiry, for your contributions to skepticism. What do these awards mean to you?

Getting awards is extremely gratifying; it means your peers and colleagues respect and honor your work. But it’s also humbling. The next day, everyone forgets, so it’s back to work.

8. Who most influenced you? Can you recommend any seminal books/articles by them?

I hate lists! This question is impossible, because my influences were feminism, and the countless important books in psychology, politics, and culture about gender equality and how to achieve it; great studies in social psychology; great writers and poets, who have inspired me as a writer . . . how long have you got? Besides, what had an impact on me might have no interest to you. My advice to students, therefore, is always to follow your heart, mind, and nose—explore. Read in areas other than your specialty. Read for fun. Read and memorize poetry. Take courses not only because it is a required subject, but because you’ve heard the professor is brilliant and compelling—even if that course is far afield from your major.

9. Where do you see psychology going?

The biggest issue that psychology will face, in my view, is to remember that it is *psychology*. The biomedical revolution is transforming research and how we understand human behavior; neuroscience in psychology and other fields is rising in dominance. But we

must not overlook the equally powerful influences of culture, learning, and the environment in determining how we behave, what we believe, and how we shape our worlds.

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MADELEINE THIEN

Writer-in-Residence, Simon Fraser University



Madeleine Thien is the author of three books of fiction, including a story collection, *Simple Recipes*, and her most recent book explores the aftermath of the Cambodian civil war and genocide. She is a previous recipient of the City of Vancouver Book Award, the

Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize, the **Amazon.ca** First Novel Award, and the Ovid Festival Prize, and was a finalist for a Commonwealth Writers Prize, the Kiriyaama Prize and the Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction. Her novels have been translated into 18 languages, and her essays and fiction have appeared in *The Guardian*, *Granta*, *PEN America*, the *Globe & Mail*, the *National Post*, *Eighteen Bridges*, and *Brick*. Madeleine is the 2013-14 Writer-in-Residence at Simon Fraser University.

For more information and books:

Twitter

Dogs at the Perimeter: **Amazon** and **Website**

Certainty: **Amazon**

ABSTRACT

In the following sweeping, but brief, interview of author and Simon Fraser University Writer-in-Residence, Madeleine Thien, she discusses her geographic, linguistic, and cultural roots; influential experiences in youth; educational background; authored books and short stories such as *Certainty*, *Dogs at the Perimeter*, *The Chinese Violin*, *Simple Recipes: Stories*; current work; purpose of art and artists; controversial topics such as race in literary circles; ‘minority populations’ in the world of literature; things needing doing in the short- and long-term in the Lower Mainland and abroad; advice for youth; influence of the internet on teaching, writing, and publishing; worries and hopes for writing in the future; and recommended organizations.

Keywords: Publishing, ‘minority populations’, race.

1. In terms of geography, culture, and language, where does your family background reside? How do you find this influencing your development?

My parents speak different dialects of Chinese (Hakka and Cantonese) and so our common language was always English. Although, often, my parents would speak their own dialect to each other – so two languages simultaneously – and they would understand. My mother was born in Hong Kong and my father in Malaysia, but they rarely spoke about life before Canada. I think, for different reasons,

and with different degrees of success, they both tried to forget. They couldn't afford to return home, and so they had to accept that it was gone or else feel the constant pain of being cut off. For a long time I felt an incredible sadness when I thought about the sacrifices my parents made for us. Now that I'm older, I see their courage, selflessness and their extraordinary reinvention.

2. How was your youth? How did you come to this point? What do you consider a pivotal moment in your transition to writing?

It was chaotic. We moved a lot and my parents were under constant financial stress. My siblings left home at very young ages, and my father left when I was sixteen. That was probably one of the earlier pivotal moments, because for a while he simply disappeared. I was living with my mother, but we were really cut off from one another emotionally. I lived in my head. Writing became a way to express things that were unsayable, either because they were private and confused, or because they might injure another person, or because I didn't know what the truth was. Writing was a space to lay things down.

3. Where did you acquire your education? What education do you currently pursue?

I studied contemporary dance at Simon Fraser University (SFU) and, later on, creative writing at The University of British Columbia (UBC). My devotion to books, reading and learning is intense but also exhausting. I'm deeply interested in 20th century history, particularly transitional times; I'm utterly

fascinated by the Silk Road, and also the post-independence years in Southeast Asia, and lately, Communist China. I'm also working on documentary projects, art installations, and I occasionally choreograph. I want to live about a thousand lives! I think that's why the novel, and fiction, have been the mainstay in my life.

4. At present, you hold the 'Writer-in-Residence' position at Simon Fraser University. What does the position provide for you?

Yes, I'm incredibly lucky. The English Department is full of creative, questioning and generous scholars. And SFU has brought me back to Vancouver where I grew up, but where I haven't lived for more than twelve years.

5. You have written four major works: *Certainty*, *Dogs at the Perimeter*, *The Chinese Violin*, *Simple Recipes: Stories*. Most recently, *Dogs at the Perimeter*, I read it. I urge readers to go and purchase the book. For those

interested, what inspired this book? What is the overarching theme?

I had been spending months at a time in Cambodia, and the country preoccupied me more and more. For me, Cambodia is like nowhere else – inhabiting his seam between the ancient cultural reaches of India and China, all filtered through a formidable Khmer culture. The Cambodian genocide happened when I was a child and has been largely forgotten by the rest of the world; or, if remembered, is remembered almost abstractly. That our governments played an undeniably large role in the de-stabilization of Cambodia and its civil war, and that the ensuing genocide claimed the lives of 1.7 million people, and that hundreds of thousands of Cambodians had to seek refuge outside of their country – has become a footnote of history. I wanted to think about how people begin again, how they remember and how they forget, and how these acts change over the course of a life. The Cambodians I know live both inside and

outside their memories, they carry ruptured selves and also, in their own philosophy, multiple souls.

6. If you currently work and play with a piece of writing, what do you call it? What is the general theme and idea behind it?

It has no title as of yet. I've finished a draft and am fine tuning now. The centre of the book is the story of three young musicians studying at the Shanghai Conservatory in the 1960s. They're Chinese musicians studying Western classical music, trying to express themselves through Bach, Beethoven, Prokofiev, Debussy, and also trying to express the tenor of the times. Because of Mao's extremism during the Cultural Revolution, this expression proves not only to be untenable, but it alters their lives forever. This novel is about how ideas and artistic practices move from East to West and West to East, what it means to speak in another language (be that music, ideology or literature), and it's also about copying, repetition and the desire,

however illusory, for transcendence, to be outside of one's time.

7. If any, what do you consider the purpose of art? More importantly, what role do artists play in shaping, defining, and contributing to society and culture?

To be a witness to this time and place, and to each other. I don't see it as a record of one's self. I want my art to be a record of the people and the world around me. A complicated questioning of what is, and a way to learn how to see more than I do now.

8. If you had sufficient funding and time, what would you like to write?

I think it would be the same. I think of funding and time almost solely as a means to write, and so I try to create the conditions for this in my day to day life.

9. What do you consider the most controversial topic in writing at the moment? How do you examine the issue?

Race. It makes everyone afraid. A few decades ago we could talk about race, but now even

saying the word is difficult, in both national and geopolitical contexts.

10. In terms of representation of 'minority populations' in literary circles, presentation of awards and honours, and media time provided, what do you consider the present conditions? What do you think and feel about these conditions?

I think literary culture in Canada and America has been adversely affected by the closing down of bookshops and the merging of publishers. It's extremely competitive, and bookshops and publishers are simply looking to survive. It makes sense that, with such fine margins, they support (financially, emotionally, intellectually) work that has the potential to be mainstream. But how do we imagine mainstream? Sadly, I think that we mean white middle- or upper-class. So this audience (or the way a publisher envisions this audience and what they want) is reflected, in some way, in the novels that are published and supported. A Chinese novelist might sell a million copies in China, but a publisher here

may still see that work as foreign, other and unlikely to appeal.

I think we should widen our understanding of the reader.

I'm a pretty stubborn person, and so these conditions make me want to push back the boundaries even more.

11. Furthermore, in concrete, or practical and applied, terms, what needs doing? How might these aims come to fruition? What about their short- and long-term implications for impacting the literary culture in the Lower Mainland, in Canada, and abroad?

Deeper engagement and from those of us who have another perspective.

Acknowledgement that

New York literary culture is an echo chamber and increasingly narrow.

I'm teaching an Asian Literature course in the US right now, I teach in a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) program in Hong Kong, where I work with writers from around the world, and I'm helping to develop the curriculum for a fine

arts university in Zimbabwe. I love the responses I get when I ask this younger generation why literature matters, why they are studying it, and why bookshops are shelved with stories that are already familiar to us. Does it matter to us as individuals or as a society if our literature supports singular concepts of national identity, or when celebrated literature is narcissistic or apolitical, or when the majority of the world is invisible in 99% of the literature we read and discuss? We have a stake in trying to see what the system makes invisible, and then articulating these gaps in forthright and intelligent ways.

12. Who most influenced you? Why them? Can you recommend any books or articles by them?

James Baldwin. Cees Nooteboom, *All Souls Day*. Alice Munro. Michael Ondaatje, *Running in the Family* and so many other books. Dionne Brand. Ma Jian, *Beijing Coma* and *Red Dust*. Liao Yiwu. Sven Lindqvist. Tsitsi Dangarembga, *The Book of Not* and *Nervous Conditions*. Hannah Arendt. Antonio Damasio

and Oliver Sacks. Shirley Hazzard, *The Great Fire* and *The Transit of Venus*. Colin Thubron, *The Hills of Adonis* and *In the Shadow of the Silk Road*. Dostoevsky and Chekhov. The literature, memoir and reportage around Cambodia, from Vaddey Ratner to Bree Lafreniere, Loung Ung, Elizabeth Becker, Francois Bizot, Jon Swain and Peter Maguire. Bao Ninh, *The Sorrow of War*. Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Unconsoled*, *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go* and *When We Were Orphans*. All these writers break form and enlarge content, they are humane and, in my eyes, fearless.

13. Where do you see writing, the teaching of writing, and publishing in the near and far future? How does, and will, the internet change the landscape?

I'm curious about the publishing worlds of India and China. I wonder how they'll influence and alter the English-language market, how soon will they become centres of influence alongside London and New York. I hope the internet will break down some of the

stagnation in the way we talk about books, and which books we encounter.

14. What advice do you have for young writers?

Fiction is not outdated or tired. Fiction is what you make of it, what you bring to it, how far you're willing to travel both into yourself and outside yourself. Don't knock the imagination.

15. What worries and hopes do you have for the world of literature regarding the older and younger generations - writers and readers?

I'm not worried. I think that even when things seem stagnant or narrow, fissures always appear. I love multimedia and the experimentation with the new forms available to us via our laptops and phones and interconnectedness. But I also value closing all that down, turning inward, reading a book, and giving time, attention and focus to the interpretation and engagement with story.

16. Besides your own organizational affiliations and literary interests, what

associations, writers, and even non-/for-profits can you recommend for interested readers?

The Documentation Centre of Cambodia (DC-CAM) and the Bophana Centre. And, in Vancouver, the extraordinary Thursdays Writing Collective.
<http://www.dccam.org/>
<http://www.bophana.org/site/index.php>
<http://thursdayswritingcoll.netfirms.com/worpress/>

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DR. DIANE PURVEY

Dean of Arts, Kwantlen Polytechnic University



Dr. Diane Purvey is the Dean of Arts at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. She is the co-editor of *Child and Family Welfare in British Columbia: A History* (Detselig Press) and, with John Belshaw, the co-author of *Private Grief, Public Mourning: The Rise of the Roadside Shrine in British Columbia* (Anvil) as well as *Vancouver Noir, 1930-1960* (Anvil). Her research

interests include the history of deinstitutionalization as part of a Canada-wide project and educational leadership internationally. She is a contributor to *Vancouver Confidential* (Anvil). A homegrown Vancouverite, Diane attended the University of British Columbia (B.A., Ph.D.) and the University of Victoria (M.A.) and for several decades taught history in various BC colleges and universities.

ABSTRACT

In this interview with Dr. Diane Purvey of Kwantlen Polytechnic University, the subject matter of the interview covers a broad range of historical, philosophical, and biographical information developing both the education, person, and productions of the interviewee. Dr. Purvey's interview covers the following subject matter: positions held within Academy, personal itinerary to the academy, developed interest in social and educational studies within a historical framework, research from the past to the present and desired in the future, the role of 'The University' in undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate life, advice for youth, and the point of education.

Keywords: Historical framework, academy, 'The University'.

1. What positions have you held in Academe? What position do you currently hold?

My positions held have been: Assistant Professor in the School of Education in the Faculty of Human, Social and Educational Development at Thompson Rivers University, where I was promoted to the position of Associate Professor. I was also Chair of a large department. I applied for and was offered the position of Dean here at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Also, I have done a lot of different sessional and online teaching, at both the undergraduate

and graduate levels. In fact, I recently taught a couple of courses at Royal Roads, in both online and face-to-face formats. However, this is my first full-time administrative role.

2. How did you come to this point in your academics? Who/what influenced you the most?

Soon after I started a permanent job at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) I became Chair. I discovered I was good at it. It felt right. What is more, I liked it. However, administrative work is not highly valued in the Faculties. It is not something faculty desire to go into. For example, when I told people I

had taken on the position here, many of my colleagues responded that I had gone onto the dark side. It is seen as a negative rather than something to aspire to. While at TRU, I slowly started doing more administrative work. I sat on more internal and external committees. In 2012 I was invited to apply for my current Dean of Arts position, but I was on sabbatical at the time and I had full intention to return to TRU. It was one of those situations where I thought it would be interesting to go through the interview process. I thought I will see what it is like. It was low risk for me because I had a job which I liked and looked forward to there. And, the more I looked into the position at KPU, the more I was intrigued. The interviews were great. I liked the people I met. I like the trajectory of Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) from a college to a university-college to a polytechnic university. It felt like a good fit for me.

3. How did you gain interest in Social and Educational Studies? Where did you acquire your education?

I think of myself as a historian. I did my B.A. and M.A. in History. When I decided to do my Ph.D., I wanted to work with a particular historian. Her name is Veronica Strong-Boag. At the time, she was at Simon Fraser University (SFU) in the history department. About the time I talked to her, and she agreed to be my supervisor, she had accepted a position at University of British Columbia (UBC). She would become the head of the CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES AND GENDER RELATIONS. That position was affiliated with Social and Educational Studies at UBC. Now, Nicki, my supervisor, is a historian, but she became associated with Social and Educational Studies. Therefore, being her student, I became, *de facto*, associated with Social and Educational Studies. I do not have a teaching degree, nor a teaching background in terms of K-12, but I

began to teach in the teacher training program and the courses I taught had to do with history of education, history of childhood, history of women, and the history of the family. These were the history courses within Social and Educational Studies. Social and Educational Studies at UBC is composed of sociology, history, anthropology, and philosophy of education. None, or few, of the faculty within Social and Educational Studies have teaching degrees. The courses are called foundational because they look at the history or sociology of education. That is how I got into it. It is a bit odd because many people think I come from education, but I do not.

4. What kinds of research have you conducted up to the present?

Lots of research, it is kind of funny. As I became affiliated with Social and Educational Studies, and earned my Ph.D., I became aware that a lot of the jobs available were the jobs in education. I took the job at TRU in Educational Studies. However, my research

continued to be in history. My Ph.D. was on women in the family in Canada in the post-World War II period (1945-1960), and the transition from war time to peace time and the way this played out in the context of the family during the Cold War. For instance, the context of the Cold War was creating a discourse of 'a stable nation is a stable home'. My Masters was on orphanages, which was on the history of childhood. So my Ph.D. was a continuation of research on the history of the family, but in a different time period. I published and edited a collection of articles on the history of family and childhood issues. I worked on roadside shrines, which was a history of grieving and memorialization in British Columbia (BC). I published more recently a book co-authored with my husband called *Vancouver Noir*, which is Vancouver between the 1930 and 1960 period. Also, I recently began work on de-institutionalization. Beginning in the 1950s in Canada, people began to leave mental health facilities. I looked at their experiences. What

was the experience of deinstitutionalization like for them? In addition, I studied deinstitutionalization of the developmentally disabled. I focus much of my research in the domain of. About three years ago I thought, I really am in a Faculty of Education, I should do some educational research. Opportunities arose around the history of 'principal preparation' programs in the province, 'diversity', and diversity education and administration. When I was on sabbatical in 2011/2012, I did a lot of that research which is coming out in a number of publications this year. I have oscillated between history and education, which for me are two separate tracks of research with modest intersections. As of late, it is difficult to continue researching because of the demands of this position, but I consider it really important for me, as Dean of the Faculty of Arts, to continue with a research agenda. So, although difficult in terms of finding the time, it is important and a definite priority for me.

5. In your current role as Dean of Arts, where do you see 'The University' (as an abstract) going?

Good question, I could talk a lot about that, but I think we are re-defining 'The University'. Is it a place for people to become credentialed for a skill or job? Is it job preparation? Or is it the place for people to become enlightened in terms of liberal education? I do not necessarily consider these antithetical, although they are often presented as such. I do not think they necessarily need teasing apart. For instance, in the university, we can prepare people for jobs and for living in a global society. Prepare them for living in a society with people who have a multitude of diversities. It does not necessarily mean not equipping them with the tools for a job. At KPU, we have the polytechnic title, but we have liberal education courses. The courses do not necessarily have pragmatic applications for an immediate job. For example, philosophy does not necessarily teach someone a skill for a job, but it does open our

minds by making us consider things in a different way, especially those things that we have not considered before. We may not have questioned ourselves and our assumptions before, which is essential, to me, to be a citizen in today's world and to be a good employee at virtually any job. In terms of the direction for the University, I think universities will be around for some time. I would like to see universities having more open access regarding the constraints people have with respect to the cost of university. Even though universities may not be very expensive, while attending university you may be unable to work, which is a negative expense. I want universities to be more open, more available, and **much** more flexible in terms of when we offer courses. Not simply a more fulsome summer semester, but I mean weekends, evenings, early mornings, that sort of stuff to make education way more accessible for people. Education or a university is becoming more than graduating from high school, doing your four years like I

did, but becoming a place to come back to for continual learning. This is the place where I see universities going. In terms of our post-secondary institutions, I like the idea of various institutions connecting to one another. For instance, a student could live in Dawson Creek going to Northern Lights College (NLC) can take those courses and go to Athabasca University (AU) for open learning, come here, and then put things together from a variety of experiences. Also, I am a big believer in prior learning assessment. Putting things together from these various life experiences and different courses that they have taken. It is fundamental to the institution. You know, not all faculty at KPU conduct research. They may not conduct research in the traditional academic sense, but they are actively engaged in the research and the scholarship of teaching and learning, they re-work assignments, think about their classes, re-design their courses, and they think about this in consistent and constant ways without even realizing it or

recognizing it as a form of research. I think research in all its forms is important for me to recognize and value.

6. In some cases, you have sciences such as biology bringing the knowledge and experiments down to the high school level, and having ambitious teachers and their students, at least in some cases, attempt, and in occasional cases succeeding, to publish their work.

I love that. I think more high school students should come into the university setting and receive dual-credits. I love the idea of having students engage in the university in this way. I think KPU should do more of this, and I have been an active supporter of the dual credit program, which at KPU is called Xcel.

7. Since you began studying social and educational studies, what do you consider the controversial topics? How do you examine the controversial topics?

I work with people have mental health issues. They have problems, obviously, and

this impacts the research. For instance, I worked with a woman in creating a video. She disappeared for about six months. I worried about her. As it turns out, she went through a bad time. She did not want to be part of the world. Now, she is back – to my delight. However, these factors come into play when conducting the research. It can come into their own experiences with poverty, stigma, homelessness, and so on. All of those things are much different compared to going out to the library and having total control for four hours to conduct research on archival materials. This has made me appreciate working with people, and the challenges of that. The dynamic between you, as the researcher – let’s face it, a middle-class privileged white researcher – and the way it plays out in the research, how this plays out in our relationship, and the way I need to understand and research their lives. It has led to really, really understanding other people, and by that, also understanding myself. I am a historian through and through. I love

history. I do not want to devalue history, but working with actual people is a different animal – let me tell you. It has hugely changed my attitude to research and to people.

8. In both cases, we have qualitative research.

I do mostly qualitative research; a little quantitative, but not a lot. Most of my historical research is 20th century, recent history.

9. How would you describe your philosophical framework? How did it change?

When I was first in university, I was exposed to Marxism and Socialism, which was huge for me. Labour history had a huge influence on me. Then I was introduced to feminist history during my masters, and that had a big influence on me as a female in the academy because I came to realize I had only a few female role models. In terms of both faculty and historians, at that time in the 80s, it was much different. Even when I was a history

student, to make it from there to a professorship was a huge challenge, I will give a little example. When I decided to do my Ph.D., I had finished my B.A., worked for a while, began my masters, had a child, finished my master's dissertation, had two more children, and then decided to do a Ph.D. I applied to various universities and for a few that included an interview process. In one interview, the interviewers wondered about the gap between finishing my masters and starting my Ph.D. I worked at (what is now) KPU, Douglas College, University of the Fraser Valley, Simon Fraser University, and Vancouver Island University, all of the institutions of the lower mainland going back and forth between them attempting to gather together a life. An interviewer asked, "Why did you take a 5 to 6 year break?" I paused and said, "I had three children." He replied, "I put it to you. If you were serious about your academic life, you would not have had children." That was in the 90s. I thought, "That makes a statement." Maybe, that is the

reason for women not existing in significant numbers in the academy. If he treated me like that, I wonder of the treatment of his female colleagues.

10. If you had unlimited funding and unrestricted freedom, what would you enjoy researching?

That is a good question. It goes to my previous statements about working with people having mental diagnoses. That is, although I love history and think of myself as a historian, and believe a historical perspective benefits our understanding of everything in our society, I have to tell you, from working with people having mental diagnoses and seeing their experience, the way they walk through life and stick with it, especially coupled with my living in Gastown, Vancouver now. One and a half blocks from Hastings Street, the population, the homeless population, addicts, I know many of these people are deinstitutionalized. They have a ton of mental health problems. I cannot help but think, if we focus our research on people

suffering from addictions and if they received appropriate help, we would be a much better society. If I could have unlimited funds, and research anything I wanted, I would research the way to support people with mental health diagnoses. How do we help them? How do we get them to a point where they can help themselves? How do we create real choices for them? How do we get them more housing? How do we get services for people? What is the intersection between crime and the legal system with the homeless and addicted population – even diagnosis? All of that stuff. I consider this a huge social justice issue in our society today. I think many people think of this as too much to take in. It's overwhelming. Therefore, they blame the victim. I think this problem is screaming out for attention in the inner cities and committed citizens want to do something about it. I would really focus energy on this issue.

11. Sheryl Sandberg made a statement in her TED talk akin to that, but from the

female side of the ledger, “If it’s me who cares about this, obviously, giving this talk, during this talk, I can’t even notice that the men’s hands are still raised, and the women’s hands aren’t still raised. How good are we as managers of our companies and our organizations at seeing that the men are reaching for opportunities more than women?”

Yes, I began to realize this at a certain point in my life. I went to seek out female faculty members as mentors. I searched my faculty, female members of the Ph.D. committee, and so on. Interestingly, the ones I found were tough. Sometimes tougher than males. I asked a woman on the Ph.D. committee, “Why is that the case?” She said, “It’s a tough world out there. You have to be tough. That is my attitude towards it. I had to deal with it. You will have to deal with it.” At the time, I thought this was unfair because my experience does not have to replicate her own experience. Her experience was twenty years previous. In terms of influences, I would say

feminism. I went from the labour history to looking at feminist historians. I think of some of them like Natalie Zemon Davis, a French historian, as being particularly influential. She wrote a number of books, which I like because of their interface between academic history and history for a popular audience. She wrote a book called *The Return of Martin Guerre*, which was a book set in 16th century France. It became a movie. She was the historical consultant on the movie. I found that amazing to bring history to the people through this medium. Actually, I heard her speak a short time ago at UBC. She is wonderful. She was the second woman president of the American historical Association and in 1971 she co-taught at the University of Toronto one of the first courses in North America on the history of women and gender, and hence has been an important figure in the development of that field. In terms of my philosophical orientation, I would say a social history perspective. In other words, a history of marginalized people

whether that be due to labour or class, gender, ability, race or ethnicity, sexuality, or the intersection of these..

12. One mistake of people: the fundamental attribution error. We look at the contextual factors and the individual. We attribute the surrounding environment for our faults/accomplishments and the individual for other people's faults/accomplishments. For instance, we, as individuals, say, "I am good because of talent." For others, we say, "They ARE evil because of them."

We need to develop empathy. My regular driving route to KPU has recently become re-routed. Now, I travel through the alleys for part of the drive. I regularly drive by 10 to 15 women. They are street workers in the downtown eastside. It is sad. Do not misread me, I am not saying that it is a bad thing to do because I am not commenting on these peoples' choices or the circumstances that drove them to this place. However, these

women are severely marginalized. Most of the women are addicts; many are aboriginal women; some of them are in their teens. It is tragic. We live amongst this and we are educated people with lots of resources who know about past crimes such as Robert Picton and who nevertheless turn a blind eye to the suffering of others.

13. Yet, it does not seem like an idealistic notion to me. Here's my sense of you, on the one hand, you state the observation, and "This is a problem. We have to fix it." On the other hand, it does not seem like much lay commentary on war, "War is horrible. We should end war." Of course, people consider war bad. In that, you seem pragmatic in problem-solving here compared to the idealistic, optimistic paying of lip-service to negative societal issues. In other words, we need reasonable consideration of the amount of reduction in these problems.

Absolutely right, we do have some solutions. We do have harm reduction, safe-

injection sites, INSITE, and so on. But things like 'Just Say No' do not work. Again, I know myself as a historian and historians don't have the reputation in the academy of leading social causes, but this is something that we can do. We can do *something* about this.

14. In short, other than the theoretical, we need to do concrete, on-the-ground research. In the immediate, something practical.

Yes! In my work with colleagues on this mental health project, one of things we are developing are educational resources for people in professional programs. When individuals receive a mental health diagnosis they inevitably end up meeting with a lawyer, doctor, a nurse, a social worker, and so on. When those professionals are being educated, what do they need to know about the people with a mental health diagnosis? I ask the people in the group I am working with, what would you want these professional people to know about your life? We are developing these resources that will be used in

education. We work with colleagues who have various mental health diagnoses, fascinating! We have a group of about 20 or so. 2 of them are doing their masters in history and ended with mental health concerns and on the street. Their lives completely changed. I was a student. I was doing my master's degree in history. People have narrow assumptions of people who are homeless, living in poverty, and who have a mental health diagnosis.

15. What advice do you have for undergraduate and graduate students?

I think going into the world and experiencing in all of its terror and beauty is important. Take risks, even for university students, go into a course unrelated to your field, try a lab, go out there and work with community people. One of the things I consider important, not everyone has the opportunity, travel out in the world – even volunteering in the downtown eastside. Go to India, Germany if you want, and do a year abroad, even a semester – travel up

north! These experiences are worth it. When you take risks, leave the comfortable behind, whether for a sustained period of time or one day or a week, the benefits are huge.

16. What is the most important point about education?

I considerate it important to understand history. If we understand, we know why things are the way they are today. So a classic, easy-to-understand example, is the place of aboriginals in society today. If we understand history, and acquire a history of aboriginal people before colonization, look at the colonization period, look at the epidemics of disease, and, more recently, residential schools and the sixties scoop, that would allow us to have a deeper understanding of some of the challenges facing our society today – especially in terms of aboriginal people. Another example of the importance of history is simply developing an understanding of our education system. You go to school from September to June, why these dates? Why is school something paid for by the state? Why is it

that people without children pay for the education of all of our society's children? Our ancestors wanted our society full of people educated a certain way. It was a form of indoctrination. It was also a way of creating a viable workforce. There was a belief that if you had to train children to be good productive workers so you began by training them to go to school at a specific time and days of the week. Think of a difference that made to children and to our notion of childhood. Previously, most children got up with the sunrise and slept at sunset. They lived with the rhythms of the seasons. Imagine how different it was to always have to be at school at 9:00 am no matter the time of year. People previously did not have a sense of time that was coupled to a clock. Suddenly, you have to be at school at 9 o'clock. At 10 o'clock, you have to open your algebra textbooks, and so on. The purpose of school, of mass school, was to pave the way for people in the workforce: industry. There was a reason for the development of public

schooling. There was a historical reason for that. Without understanding that, I consider it difficult for people to understand the grounding for our educational system. People take it for granted. It is paid for by the state. It runs from September to June, and so on. To me, that lesson is a critical thinking lesson. If you begin to question things like that, you begin to learn that the taken-for-granted structures in our society are not simply there. They happened for a reason. It allows you to re-think anything in our life. Also, it allows us to think of the possibility of change. If our schools, as an example, were developed these structures in these ways, then they can change. It seems to me a hopeful notion for change.

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DR. WANDA CASSIDY

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Dr. Wanda Cassidy is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University and Director of the Centre for Education, Law and Society (www.cels.sfu.ca), an endowed centre she co-founded in 1984 with a mandate to improve the legal literacy of children and youth. In addition to her work in legal literacy, Dr. Cassidy researches and writes in the areas of cyberbullying/cybercivility, ethic of care, marginalized youth, school culture, and human rights education. In 2011 she received the prestigious *Isidore Starr Award* from the American

Bar Association for exemplary work in law-related education in schools, the only non-American to have received this award. Dr. Cassidy regularly shares her expertise with the media and twice has been nominated for the President's Award for Service to the University through Public Affairs and Media Relations.

ABSTRACT

A comprehensive interview with Associate Professor and Director of the *Centre for Education, Law & Society* at Simon Fraser University, Dr. Wanda Cassidy, on the following subject-matter: geographical, cultural, and linguistic history; pivotal moments within youth and young adulthood; duties and responsibilities of Dr. Cassidy's present titles; early research; defining and describing cyberbullying; emotional and psychological consequences of cyberbullying; individual and collective remedies for dealing with cyberbullying through 'cyberkindness' and a 'culture of care'; hypothetical areas for research; the responsibility of academics and researchers to society; and personal hopes and worries regarding cyberbullying in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, Canada, as well as international settings.

Keywords: 'Cyberkindness', 'Culture of Care', emotional, psychological, cyberbullying.

1. In terms of geography, culture, and language, where does your family background reside? How do you find this influencing your development?

My mother's background is Swedish-- from northern Sweden, near the Arctic Circle. My grandfather came to Canada and set up a homestead in Alberta. His wife and their oldest five children – my mother had not yet been born – were scheduled to follow two years later, on the Titanic...seriously! My grandfather didn't know that the Titanic was

overbooked and his family had to take a later boat; instead, he thought they were lost. Of course, communication was poor in those days.

My father's background is Irish, English, and Scottish. His grandparents immigrated to Nova Scotia, with 3 of the children (my grandfather being one), later moving west to Saskatchewan, where my grandfather made a living as a professional boxer. (Laughs).

Apparently, he never lost a fight and won

most matches by knock-out. I guess, he had a bit of an Irish temper. (Laughs)

From both sets of grandparents (and from my parents), I learned the value of hard work, kindness towards others, and being adventurous. Even during the difficult days of the Depression, my maternal grandfather never turned away anyone asking for work on his farm, for food, or a place to stay. There was a generosity of spirit, which was communicated to his children and grandchildren

2. How was your youth? How did you come to this point? What do you consider a pivotal moment?

Growing up, I always wanted to make a positive difference in the world and to help others. Back when I was in university, not a lot of doors were open for women, and I did not have a lot of professional roles models. For example, among my 73 first cousins, I am the only one who went on to do a doctorate. Because I loved teaching and enjoyed working with young people, I followed in my mother's

footsteps and became a teacher. When I was offered the job, I was asked, "Would you like to teach Law 12 as part of your teaching assignment?" As a history major, I thought, "I know nothing about law, but I want the job." (Laughs) I said, "I will approach it as a person who knows little, but knows people who do know." So developed my course around a community-based curriculum, inviting many guests into my classroom and learning with the students. I received funding from the Legal Services Society to share the model I had developed, since very few Law 12 teachers had a law degree, and later was hired by this agency as their Schools Program Director. My job was to provide curriculum resources and professional development for teachers and students in British Columbia, to improve their overall knowledge of law.

This position was pivotal in my own career. While planning a national conference I met a professor at Simon Fraser who encouraged me to develop a program with him in the Faculty of Education. We were able to secure

funding from the Law Foundation of BC, the Real Estate Foundation, the Notary Foundation and other agencies and law firms, and began what came to be called the Centre for Education, Law & Society.

While developing the Centre (CELS), I obtained my Master's degree in law-related education from SFU and later secured a scholarship to attend the University of Chicago, where I earned my Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction. I returned to SFU in a professorship position, where I happily remain.

In terms of what motivates me: I like to be creating new things, to push the boundaries of "what is" to "what could be." I like to be challenged and seek to draw like-minded people together to advance these goals.

3. At present, you hold the position Director for the 'Centre for Education, Law & Society'. What responsibilities and duties does this imply?

It is a part of my work as an Associate Professor of Education. The centre's

mandate is to improve the legal literacy of youth and young adults, in the school system, in community settings and at the post-secondary level. We do this through a program of research, teaching and community-based initiatives. We developed 3 undergraduate courses and recently completed our first offering of a Master's program in justice, law, and ethics. Our research topics vary: for example, recently we completed a 4-year study on legal literacy of youth in grades 6 to 10, which focused on human rights, citizenship, identity issues and environmental sustainability. We've also investigated cyberbullying in schools and at the post-secondary levels. I also helped establish a school for students who face multiple challenges in their lives and who don't succeed in the regular public school. I continue to be an educational consultant to this unique and highly successful school (see www.focusbc.org).

My job as Director is to manage our current projects, seek additional funding for new

projects, provide support to graduate students, and work with other agencies to improve the legal literacy of youth. Legal literacy involves understanding the role law plays in our society and what it means to be an informed, engaged citizen. The law can be a tool to create a society that is respectful and caring towards others, sensitive to human and civil rights, and inclusive of diversity. Legal literacy also involves knowledge of those aspects of law that affect our daily lives in a practical way, such as purchasing goods from a store, holding a job, renting a home, or getting married. It also involves an understanding of broader influences which guide our society, such as the UN Declaration of Human Rights and other UN documents. Also, asking, “Are we implementing those basic human rights in our own society and elsewhere in the world?” And if we are, what role can Canada play in providing for the needs and rights that all human beings should have for themselves?

4. In some recent research, you note the unfortunate global occurrence of bullying. In particular, the existence of cyberbullying. For readers, can you define cyberbullying? What negative psychological, emotional, and physical consequences arise from cyberbullying for the victims and the perpetrators?

‘Cyberbullying’ is bullying through online sources such as smart phones, Facebook, e-mail, blogs or chat rooms, or any of the various technological tools at our disposal. It involves sending harmful, derogatory, harassing, negative, sometimes repulsive – even sexual, messages or images to somebody with the intent to harm or hurt them. The impact is often quite devastating. It can cause sleeplessness, anxiety, depression, fear, inability to concentrate, and sometimes leads to suicidal thoughts. Cyberbullying is different from face-to-face bullying in that it can be anonymous: “Where is this coming? A friend, an acquaintance, a stranger, someone I sit next to in class, why are they doing this to me?”

People are so connected online. They open their social networking sites and see a derogatory message from someone. How do they deal with it? Oftentimes, they cannot get rid of the message, which results in them being bullied over and over again.

Research shows that cyberbullying can start as early as age 9 or 10, extending into adolescence and dying down somewhat by age 15 or 16. In our current study we are looking at the extent of cyberbullying at the post-secondary level, among undergraduates and towards faculty members. We were surprised to learn that approximately 1/5 of undergraduate students at the 4 universities we studied had experiencing cyberbullying from another student, and approximately the same number of faculty members had been cyberbullied either by students and/or by colleagues. These messages can be hurtful—indeed devastating-- at any age.

5. Your conceptualization of 'cyberkindness' seems to me, in essence, digital civility, bringing civil

discourse in the real world into the electronic media.

Yes, I call the internet and other outlets for communication a 'flat medium', in that, they cannot convey facial expressions, body language, or tone of voice, and therefore the intent of a message may be misinterpreted. Further the sender does not see the impact a message might have on the recipient, such as they might see in face-to-face bullying. We have yet to learn more effective ways to communicate through technology.

Also, we have cyberbullying because bullying is present in the wider society, and too many are rewarded for their bullying behaviour.

Politicians bully each other and sometimes seem to relish in the experience. Countries bully each other, employers bully employees, corporations bully each other to get an edge in the market, and so on.

We need to look at what is being modelled by adults, since modelling is one of the most powerful teachers. Young people learn not only from what they are told, but what they

experience and see being modeled around them.

6. What strategies can students employ individually and collectively to reduce the occurrence and harms of cyberbullying and bullying in general? In addition, within your recent work, you discuss the development of “cyber-kindness” and an “ethic of care”. For readers, what is the abridged definition of this terminology, and the practical application and outcome of them?

I began researching cyberbullying because I had done research on the ethic of care and the positive impact this philosophy had on students, teachers and the school culture.

When I began to investigate cyberbullying, I did not want to deal with the negative alone. I wanted to look at the notion of “cyber-kindness” and the ways in which technology could be used to communicate positive, respectful and kind messages. This notion of care is situated within the broader

philosophical worldview of Nel Nodding’s and Carol Gilligan’s work – caring being a relational ethic. Here caring is not a ‘fuzzy’ feeling, by rather showing empathy towards the other, understanding the needs of the other, and working in the other’s best interests.

Schools that embrace the ethic of care have less bullying and cyberbullying, because they focus on relationships, empathy and the understanding of others. For example, a couple of years ago, we worked with a school where five grade 7 girls were actively cyberbullying each other with really nasty comments on a social networking site. The principal, rather than suspending them, saw their leadership potential and re-directed the negative energy they had towards each other into working on productive projects at the school. She met with them once a week and, as the discussions unfolded, they apologized to each other about the hurtful messages they had been sending. They stopped these negative interchanges, but more importantly,

ended up contributing to the school, and influencing the culture of the whole school. Their enthusiasm for doing positive things was infectious and spilled over to the other grades as well.

What this principal demonstrated is that it is important to address the root causes of cyberbullying, not just the symptoms (i.e. the behaviour).

7. In a hypothetical perfect world with plenty of funding and time, and if guaranteed an answer, what single topic would you research?

Ways to create a kinder world, how do we change the 'human being' to become more respectful and kinder to one another? I am somewhat of a utopian in this regard.

Perhaps we can start by getting to know our neighbour, and by this, I mean getting to know others outside of our circle or enclave. Entering into a dialogue, listening to others and learning from others. A kinder world would be a more peaceful world and a happier world.

8. If any, what responsibility do academics and researchers have for contributing to society and culture?

I believe we have a 100% responsibility to share our knowledge. Further, our research should connect with real issues facing the world. We not only have a responsibility to research important issues, but to also communicate our findings to the wider public.

In my own work, I try to focus on areas that will benefit society. Also, I engage with the media and the public to bring an academic perspective to issues. For example, everyone has an opinion on cyberbullying, but we need to situate this discussion within the research. We should not develop policy based on opinion. It is important for academics, policy makers, government, the media and the public to work collaboratively to solve social problems.

9. Who most influenced you? Why them? Can you recommend any books or articles by them?

There are many, many people who influenced me, but I'll just mention a few. My parents, of course. Also four particular women. A pastor's wife when I was a teenager who made me feel that I was important and that my opinion was valued, even though I was young; she listened attentively, asked gentle but probing questions, and encouraged me to find my future.

Anna York, a friend I met when studying at the University of Chicago. Although she struggled with MS, she was always authentic, a real person with depth, honesty and integrity.

Her book, *RISING UP!*, documents her physical and spiritual journey into health.

Another woman I have known for years, Doreen, who now lives in Texas. She has experienced many challenges and setbacks in life, but is always positive, hopeful, with a deep faith that plays out in the practice of her life. She has always been there for me, when I've faced my own struggles and challenges.

Finally, I must mention the impact my daughter has had on my life.

Having a child has taught me so much -- to be wise in what I share with her, to model what I feel is important in life, to have that wonderful opportunity -- indeed a gift -- to influence someone so inquisitive and open to learn. Being given the gift of motherhood has caused me over and over again to re-evaluate my priorities and to consider what is important in life. Probably more than anyone else in my life, just as I've influenced her, she has influenced me and now that she is a young adult, she continues to surprise me with her insights, her creativity, her commitments, and her wisdom.

10. Please elaborate on a point made earlier about 'building a culture of compassion', and focusing on the important things in life and in one's work.

We are all busy. There are too many things to distract us. We need to be constantly reflecting on 'who we are' and, maybe this sounds trite, on our purpose in life. In other words, asking ourselves, "What difference do

we want to make in the world?” It could be just influencing one person. We do not need to look ‘big’ in that sense. If someone helps one child, it may be just as significant as what Mother Theresa or Nelson Mandela accomplished. We all come to that point in our lives where we ask the question, “Why am I here? Why are we here? What am I doing?” Reflecting on these big questions of life, helps us focus and work towards goals that matters.

11. What worries and hopes do you have for the educational settings of the Lower Mainland, Canada, and international settings regarding bullying and cyberbullying?

I worry about people gravitating to quick-fixes.--buy this program, bring it into the schools, and it will solve the problem of bullying or cyberbullying. This approach is not effective. Rather, we need to do the hard work of building relationships and working on the root causes of negative behaviour. This also involves each one of us examining our own behaviour.

Another worry is that people will think, “Bullying has always been with us, just deal with it.” This is not helpful to the victim nor does it show empathy. I’d like to think we can reduce incidents of bullying/cyberbullying rather than merely “learning to live with it.”

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DR. MIRIAM EREZ

Professor Emeritus, Vice Dean MBA Programs

Technion: Israel Institute of Technology



Dr. Miriam Erez is a professor in Management and Organizational Psychology, Faculty of Industrial Engineering and Management, Technion, Israel. Erez is currently the Vice Dean of the Technion MBA program; the Chair of the Knowledge Center for Innovation; the Chair of the National Council for the Promotion of Women in Science and Technology and the advisor of the Technion president on the status of women. She is also Director at Hi Center (the incubator of Haifa municipality) and at Haifa Economic Society. She served as faculty dean between 1996-1999. Prof. Erez's research has evolved around three major topics: innovation, cross-cultural organizational behavior and work motivation. Prof. Erez has co-authored and co-edited five books, more than 90 journal papers and book

chapters. Erez appears among the most cited authors in the field of management, 1983-2004 (Podsakoff, N.P., et al., *J. of Management*, 34, 2008, 641-720, Table 9). In 2002, she received the **Distinguished Scientific Award** of the International Association of Applied Psychology.

ABSTRACT

An extensive interview with the Mendes Frances Chair of Management and Economics at Technion: Israel Institute of Technology, Dr. Miriam Erez. The interview covers the breadth of Professor Erez's upbringing; responsibilities of the *The Mendes France Chair of Management & Economics*; research with focus on some select publications from 2001 to 2013; work on emotion display norms in virtual teams; hypothetical areas of research; current controversial topics in the relevant fields of research; the set of causes for low enrollment and graduation rates of women in STEM fields; responsibility of academics to society and culture; personal influences; and the state of social research in the coming 5, 10, or 25 years.

Keywords: Embeddedness, Technion, management, economics, display norms.

1. In terms of geography, culture, and language, where does your family background reside? How do you find this influencing your development?

I was born in Israel. My father came to Israel in a youth movement in 1925, as a pioneer who wanted to build an independent state for the Jewish people, and their dream was realized 1948 with the establishment of Israel as an independent state.

My mother's older brother did the same, and his family followed him and came to Israel in 1931, when my mother was 11 years old.

2. What do you consider a pivotal moment in your upbringing? Did this influence your entering into the your field? If so, how?

A pivotal moment was when my parents moved to a suburb of Haifa, when I was 8 years old. In this community the emphasis was on contribution to the society at large and to the local community in particular, including the absorption of new immigrants who managed to survive the holocaust and to come to Israel. This has strongly influence my own personal development.

3. Your current responsibilities lie in research and teaching under *The Mendes Frances Chair of management & Economics*. What does this role imply? What courses do you teach at present? In particular, what research have you conducted up to present through this position?

I do not anymore hold the Mendes France Chair... because I am a professor emeritus now. However, I am still the Vice Dean for the MBA programs, the advisor to the Technion President on the promotion of women students and faculty, I am the chair of the National Council for the promotion of women in science and technology, and the founder and chair of the Knowledge Center for Innovation, which I established after I received the Israel Prize in 2005, and I felt I want to contribution to the Israeli society by enhancing innovation in the Israeli industry.

4. An aging workforce stands as a major problem for the economy of advanced industrial nations, especially in the

long-term. According to Tanova and Boltom in 2008, traditional factors contributing to 'voluntary turnover' are the 'ease of movement' and the 'desirability of moving' with regards to work. Furthermore, you found new results about the contributory factor of 'job embeddedness'. In a paper entitled *Why People Stay: Using Job Embeddedness To Predict Voluntary Turnover* (2001), you state, "The personal and organizational costs of leaving a job are often very high." Can you define 'job embeddedness'? Why does voluntary turnover occur in spite of the 'very high' costs? In particular, what does this mean for advanced industrial nations with an aging work force?

Embeddedness conveys the meaning of being part of workplace, part of the community and part of the physical surrounding. One of our poets – Saul Tcernichovsky, wrote that a "Man is nothing but his native landscape

format”. What this means is that we are shaped by, and become part of the place in which we work, we live as part of the social community, and as part of the physical landscape. Our research findings showed that indeed, people who have a stronger sense of embeddedness are less likely to change their workplace and their social community. This paper highlights the existence of forces that attenuate the likelihood of turnover, and that it is not only the level of work satisfaction which explains the tendency to stay or quit jobs.

5. Of particular interest in the area of life, but within your area of expertise as well – work, you published a paper in 2013 called *Emotion Display Norms in Virtual Teams*. You incorporated a conceptual framework from *A Dynamic Multi-Level Model of Culture: From the Microlevel of the Individual to the Macrolevel of the Global Culture* (2004). This describes the connections of nested relationships between cultures

and values from the individual to the global level. What were the findings of this 2013 paper? In addition, in an increasingly diverse, multi-cultural, and international world and subsequent work environment, how much does understanding multi-cultural and contextual differences in emotion matter for virtual collaboration?

We are only now starting to learn the effect of a virtual, multicultural environment on human communication, on the social identity – from a local identity to a global identity, and on team cooperation and team performance. The 2013 paper on emotion display norms showed that there is going to be a global culture, with global emotion display norms. Namely, when working in the global work context, people from different cultures perceive the emotional display norms in a similar way, namely, more positive and less negative than in their own culture. While there is going to be a consensus among members from different cultures about the emotion display norms in the global

context, there is still a high variation in the perceived emotion display norms in different cultures. My prediction is that individuals and teams are going to function at two contextual environments, in their local cultural environments, in which they activate their local identity and display emotions in line with their cultural norms, and at the same time, they also function in a global context, in which they activate their global identity and display emotions similar to others who come from other cultures.

6. You co-authored an interesting paper in 2005 highly relevant to entrepreneurs in the world of international business called Culture and International Business: Recent Advanced and Future Directions. It looks into the changing nature of international business. In particular, you ask if global business will change, and if the various differences in values and culture might create a standard set of 'business practices'. The paper was meant to

draw out the basis for future directions of research. What future directions did you derive from the research?

Similar to my answer to point #6, we are going to live in two contexts – the immediate local cultural context, and the more distant, global work context. As a result, we are going to develop two identities – local and global identity, and two sets for emotional and behavioral norms – one for the local culture and one for the global culture. Hence, the world is going to be more complex and individuals will have to learn which emotion to display and which identity to activate, depending on the salience of the local versus global context. Furthermore, it will be interesting to study which identity dominates in case of identity conflicts.

7. In a hypothetical perfect world with plenty of funding and time, and if guaranteed an answer, what single topic would you research?

I would study how to enhance the level of creativity and innovation in a global work

environment of a growing complexity, and through cooperation, in order to come up with solutions to human problems in all the spectrum of life, in all parts of the world, and to share the benefit of innovation in a more egalitarian way.

8. What do you consider the controversial topic in your field at this time? How do you examine the issue?

The controversial topic in my field pertains to the increasing level of diversity in the workplace, as a result of globalization, and to the impact of team and organizational diversity on innovation.

I initiate studies on the meaning of creativity in different cultures, and studies on the interaction effect of culture and the work context on creativity. For example, in our 2013 paper we studied the level of innovation of culturally diverse teams versus homogenous teams when working under very specific instructions versus general ones and we found, that the level of creativity is higher under general versus specific instructions for

both culturally heterogeneous versus homogenous teams. This is not the case when performing and “execute” task that has one correct answer. In this case, homogeneous teams work better than heterogeneous teams when performing a task under general instructions, but there are no differences between the two types of teams when working under specific instructions.

9. You have spent time speaking on the plights of women in the academy. In particular, the low enrollment and graduation rates of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. What is the set of causes for this plight?

We are in a period of change from a traditional society with a clear sex role differentiation – women at home, men at work, to a modern egalitarian society with equal opportunities to make choices for both men and women. The change is already observed in medicine, where the percentage of men and women is equal today, but there

were times when women were not allowed to be admitted to medical schools. But another related reason for it is that women have a higher social motivation than men, and better social skills than men, and as a result, they are more attracted to jobs that allow them to interact with others and to contribute to the society. Today we find that the gap between technology and socially oriented work is getting smaller. For example, there is a strong relationship between having IT knowledge and skills, and facilitating social interactions via social networks. Also there is a strong relationship between medical instruments and helping people to improve their quality of life. In addition, there is a shortage of engineers and scientists today, and the job opportunities and the high salaries relative to social science jobs, will eventually attract more women and companies will pay more attention to make the workplace more friendly to women.

10. If any, what responsibility do academics and researchers have for contributing to society and culture?

Academics and researchers have a huge responsibility for contributing to society and culture. They are responsible for the education of the new generations, they are responsible for developing new knowledge in all fields of science and technology, and consequently, they are responsible to the quality of life and well-being of humanity.

11. Who most influenced you? Why them? Can you recommend any books or articles by them?

It is hard for me to answer it. I was influenced by different people and different books in different periods of my life. I believe that I was also influenced by the interaction with my family members and with my students as I have developed as a person, as an educator and as a researcher.

12. Where do you see your field in the next 5, 10, and 25 years? With respect to

more representation of women, where do you see the demographics of men and women? Especially, what about the high-end of the achievement?

I think that the direction of our field of social sciences in general and of organization behavior in particular is going towards a higher level of complexity, a stronger emphasis on methodology, and a new direction towards studying the physiological correlates of emotions, thoughts and behaviors.

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DR. ADELE DIAMOND

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Dr. Adele Diamond is the Canada Research Chair Professor of Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

Dr. Diamond is at the forefront of research on 'executive functions' (EFs). EFs rely on prefrontal cortex (PFC) & interrelated brain regions, & include being able to 'think outside the box' (cognitive flexibility), mentally relating diverse ideas & facts (working memory), & giving considered responses

rather than impulsive ones, resisting temptations & staying focused (inhibitory control, including selective attention).

Her lab examines fundamental questions about how PFC & EFs are influenced by biological factors (genes & neurochemistry) & by environmental factors (for ill by poverty or stress & improved by creative interventions & programs). She has a track record of discoveries that have improved treatment for medical disorders (PKU & ADHD) & impacted early education, improving millions of children's lives.

ABSTRACT

Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in developmental cognitive neuroscience, Professor Adele Diamond of the Department of Psychiatry at The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, does a comprehensive interview on her current position; major career positions; seminal experiences in youth; educational background; original dream; major areas of research such as executive function (EF) and the effects on phenylketonuria (PKU); hypothetical areas of research with unlimited funding and freedom; reflections on the further responsibilities of holding the Tier 1 Canada Research Chair position; controversial topics in her field; advice for young psychologists; people having great influence; and the importance of criticizing unsubstantiated myths.

Keywords: Canada Research Chair, developmental cognitive neuroscience, psychiatry, responsibilities, executive function, phenylketonuria.

1. What is your current position?

I am the Canada Research Chair, Tier 1, and Professor of Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience in the Department of Psychiatry at The University of British Columbia (UBC).

2. What major positions have you held in your academic career?

Now, besides being a professor and Canada Research Chair, I am the head of the division of developmental cognitive neuroscience of psychiatry at UBC. Before coming to UBC, I

was at University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMass), where I was professor of psychiatry and director of the center for developmental cognitive neuroscience. And before that, I was a visiting associate professor in the department of brain and cognitive sciences at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Before THAT, I was an assistant professor in the department of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn). Last, and prior to that, I was an

assistant professor in the department of psychology at Washington University (Wash. U) in St. Louis.

3. Can you name a seminal experience in your youth that most influenced your career direction?

I was not planning on having a career. My high school yearbook says, “Valedictorian; ambition: Housewife.” I was going to get married and have children. That changed sometime while in college. Although, I do not have a particular experience that changed it. So, no, there is no seminal experience, sorry!

4. Where did you acquire your education?

I went to the New York City Public Schools (John Bowne High School) and then I went to Swarthmore College, which is a fantastic undergraduate institution in the United States (US). Harvard University for my Ph.D. and Yale University for my post-doctoral work.

5. What was your original dream?

My original dream was to be home with my kids. And then, when I decided to go on, in college and beyond, I was not interested in science. I was interested in understanding people. I was interested in society and culture, but I was not interested in science. So I avoided anything that sounded like science. I had to take two science courses for distribution requirements. So I took engineering, but, other than that, I did not even take experimental psychology, though psychology was one of my majors, because experimental psychology sounded too much like science. When I went to graduate school, I said, “I want to do interdisciplinary studies in what I called “human development,” which I defined as including psychology, sociology, and anthropology. I thought of anthropology as doing investigations that deeply inform us about people, society and culture, however, I did not view it as science. I thought of ‘science’ as being something more objective and quantitative. Anthropology gets more at the flesh and essence of things –

understanding individuals in social context as opposed to trying to fit lots of people into some general category. It is the difference between nomothetic and idiographic science. Nomothetic being the attempt to apply principles that apply across the board, but it will not apply perfectly in any individual case. Idiographic refers to studying one case, studying it deeply, but realizing that it will not be able to completely be able to generalize to any other case.

I got two national fellowships for graduate school. One from the National Science Foundation (NSF) Another from the Danforth Foundation. I was a freebie. I got nine years of funding – more than any I could ever use. So the graduate schools said, “Fine lady, you can study whatever you want!” I went to Harvard. Although, my home was psychology. I spent the first four years primarily in sociology and anthropology. Harvard had a cross-cultural training grant that funded PhD students for three years: one year to prepare to go into the

field, one year to go anywhere you wanted to go (I was going to the South Pacific because it seemed the most idyllic, and one year to write it up. My idea was...I was reading a lot in sociology, psychology, philosophy... that asserted that people need to feel they are masters of their fate. If they did not feel they are, you see learned helplessness, depression, and suicide. Everything I was reading said there was an intrinsic human need to feel we are masters of our own fates. But everything I was reading was western. It seemed to me that was not necessarily intrinsically human. It might be that someone from another culture might not feel the same way. At any social gathering people find my idea intriguing. I felt I was not coming up with a good way to study this, however. If you think about it more deeply, it gets kind of squishy. What do you want to have control over? How do you exercise control? You can exercise control in subtle ways without it seeming to be control. The more I went into it, the less confident I was that I could come up with a

good study design. Now, I had very famous people at Harvard advising me. I did not think they had a solid idea of how to study this either. This did not seem to bother them. They said, “You’ll go on and do great work.” I said to myself, “You guys are loonie. I am not going to paradise to be miserable for a year, worried about how I’ll get a thesis out of this.” I turned down Years 2 and 3 of the funding. I gave the money back. I figured I would re-apply for funding if I ever came up with a good way study it, but I was not going to do a lousy job. So I had to come up with another thesis topic.

My first year in graduate school, which, by that time, was three years earlier. My advisor, Jerry Kagan, had been jumping up and down about the cognitive advances seen in babies in the first years of life such as stranger anxiety and finding a hidden-object. Things like that. These changes appeared at roughly the same time in babies all over the world --babies living at home, babies in daycare, in kibbutzim, in Africa, Europe, Asia, North

America, and so on. It didn’t matter. He said, “It cannot be all learning. It cannot be all experience because their experiences are too different. There must be a maturational component.” He was jumping up and down about it. He was so excited that you could not help but feel excited about it. However, at the time, I had another thesis topic. But when I gave up my original thesis topic, I came back to this question. Clearly, the maturational bit had to be in the brain. So I had to begin learning about the brain. That’s how I got into neuroscience. There was no one at Harvard in Psychology at the time studying the human brain, which is hard to believe now. I said to them, “There should be someone on my thesis committee that knows something about the brain, especially the parts of the brain I am talking about -- prefrontal cortex and the hippocampus -- just to see if what I am saying makes sense.” (My thesis was just behavioral studies with babies, but the hypothesis behind it was based on the brain.) Harvard replied, “We don’t have

anyone who does this, so we don't think it's important." But they allowed that I could add an additional member to my thesis committee from outside Harvard who had this expertise. I was very lucky that Nelson Butters at the Boston VA accepted my invitation to join the thesis committee as the fourth member.

Until I did my Postdoc in the Department of Neuroanatomy at Yale Medical School, I was pretty much self-taught because there was no one around to teach me. I mispronounced all sorts of words wrong – such as pyramidal neurons which I pronounced as pyr·a·mi·dal ('pir-ə-, mi-dal) but which should be pronounced **py·ra·mi·dal** (pə-'ra-mə-dəl) – because I was only learning by reading.

It is ironic that I never expected to be a scientist; I never wanted to be a scientist; yet I have worked not only worked in cognitive neuroscience and developmental cognitive neuroscience but in many different disciplines like molecular genetics and visual neuroscience that even after I went into

neuroscience I never imagined do any work in. It was never because I wanted to study another discipline or another technique in themselves. It was because I had a question that required that I go there. So I went into neuroscience because I wanted to answer the questioned posed by Jerry Kagan. All of the other times were that I wanted to answer the next question that came from what I was doing.

6. What have been your major areas of research?

All of my research has been tied to prefrontal cortex and the cognitive abilities dependent on prefrontal, which are loosely called executive functions (EFs). That involves being able to exert self-control to not blurt out something you regret. You think before you act rather than reacting or acting impulsively. Another part is reasoning and problem-solving – being able to hold different pieces of information in mind and relate one fact or idea to another, to be able to play with ideas in your mind. That involves working

memory. Another aspect of the inhibitory control component of EFs besides self-control is selective attention, to be able to inhibit extraneous things so that you pay attention to the most important things. The third core EF cognitive flexibility, involves being able to flexibly react to a situation rather than rigidly sticking to one plan, being able to creatively think outside the box, being able to come up with something that perhaps nobody has thought of before. All of my work has been about that. It turns out that the abilities, which were beginning to develop in babies in the first year of life all over the world, were elementary EFs: working memory and inhibitory control. After I got data from monkeys that made an argument that the frontal lobe was involved in these changes, the next question was, "What about the frontal lobe was changing?" It is too vague to say the frontal lobe is maturing. It is like saying, "Children develop." What about prefrontal cortex was changing? Probably a lot of things. But we knew in the monkey

brain that the level of the neurotransmitter, dopamine, which is very important in prefrontal cortex was increasing in the whole brain, and particularly in prefrontal. I thought increasing levels of dopamine in prefrontal might be part of the biological change making possible those cognitive changes in the babies. So how are you going to study this? It so happened that at a conference a colleague mentioned that she was looking into children with the disorder called Phenylketonuria (PKU). These kids cannot metabolize an amino acid called phenylalanine. If you do not treat this disorder, levels of phenylalanine become so high that they are toxic to the brain, and you have gross damage brain and severe mental retardation. The treatment is to try and remove phenylalanine as much as possible from the diet. However, phenylalanine never occurs in isolation. It is a component of protein. So the only way to take out phenylalanine is to take out protein. You do not want to deprive kids entirely of

protein. Doctors needed to do a delicate balance between getting a child some protein and not having the child have too much phenylalanine. Phenylalanine competes with tyrosine to enter the brain. So if the compromise the doctor works out involves the level of phenylalanine in the blood being a little more elevated than it should be, the level of tyrosine reaching the brain will a little less than it should be. Now, what the person at the conference told me was kids with PKU on the dietary compromise prescribed by doctors had EF deficits, but doctors were ignoring those reported deficits because nobody could imagine a mechanism by which only certain functions of the brain would be affected. Besides, the kids looked great on IQ tests, and they had normal head circumference. So the doctors did not want to hear about problems. They said, “We solved this. They are no mentally retarded.” Well, when I was a postdoc, on the floor below me, there was a lab headed by Bob Roth who happened to be studying the

competition between tyrosine and another amino acid. What they showed was that if tyrosine is lowered only a little bit (tyrosine is the precursor of dopamine, by the way) it does not affect most dopamine systems in the brain. They are robust in the face of having a little less raw material (a little less tyrosine from which to make dopamine). However, Bob Roth’s lab showed that prefrontal cortex is different; it is affected by even small reductions in tyrosine. So I said, “This fits what is happening with these kids with PKU.” If they are on diet, phenylalanine levels are only slightly increased, which would reduce the amount of tyrosine reaching the brain only slightly. So it should selectively affect prefrontal cortex and selectively affect EFs. We did an animal model to show this. We followed children with PKU longitudinally to show this. We showed the **mechanism** causing the EF deficits in PKU children and we showed the EF deficits more definitively than had been done before. In response, almost overnight, the

guidelines for medical treatment of PKU changed because once they had a mechanism, once they understood the cause and what to do about it, it was easy to react.

In the course of doing the longitudinal study, I got some information I did not want to hear - which was that the special property of the dopamine system in prefrontal cortex that made the effects of PKU selective to prefrontal were also true of the retina. Every last one of the special properties. To be consistent, I had to predict that the retina would be affected in kids with PKU too. I contacted the world's expert on the retina at Harvard. He got all excited because "we know this" and he started telling me at the cellular level. But I wanted to know at the behavioral level so I could study it! He said, "Well, we do not know as much about that. However, we do know that if dopamine is dramatically reduced, as in Parkinson's disease, there is a deficit in contrast sensitivity. So I teamed up with a pediatric optometrist, Chaya Herzberg. We studied

contrast sensitivity in the kids. Sure enough, they were impaired. We had two totally different behavioral deficits predicted by the same underlying mechanism. I can keep going on, but I will not. There is a paper in a book called *MALLEABLE MINDS*, edited by Rena Subotnik and others, which talks about how I went from one thing not finding, or that I did not understand, to investigating what might be going on there. How can I try to understand the thing that is not fitting? Or, what are the implications of what we know now for something else? Or, now that we know enough to help kids, how can we go about helping kids, and showing that it helps?

7. If you had unlimited funding and unrestricted freedom, what research would you conduct?

That's easy. I want to study the benefits of theatre, music, dance, storytelling, youth circus, and so on, for kids. EFs are like the 'canary in the coal mine.' They are the first to show the effects, and they show them most dramatically, if you are sad, stressed, lonely,

not physically fit, or sleep-deprived. In other words, if you want kids to be able to function well cognitively, if you want them to succeed to school and careers, you need to care about their emotional, social, and physical health. If any of those needs are unmet, they will pull EFs down. It will pull school or job performance down. If you think about the activities that address all the parts of you, it is activities like those I just mentioned. They challenge EFs, which is critical. They require holding information in mind, paying close attention and concentrating, and so on. They give kids great joy and feelings of pride and self-confidence. The things that I have been talking about are ensemble activities like orchestra, social, communal dance, and so on, where everyone is part of a group or team and working together. Everybody is an important part of a whole (social connection and belonging). All of them involve developing physically. It is most obvious with something like dance or circus. However, even something like playing an instrument requires

eye-hand coordination, manual dexterity, and so on.

That is what I would do. I had an ad in VARIETY that asked for funding to do this because the eyes of grant reviewers (who love my basic science work) glaze over when I ask for funding to study the benefits of music, dance, storytelling, or youth circus. I am considering trying to raise funds to serious, state of the art studies of this through crowdfunder funding.

The arts have been around since the beginning of civilization. And they have been in every civilization everywhere. If they were just a frill, would they have lasted so long and been found everywhere? If they were just a frill, you would not think they would have that staying power. You would not think they would have independently developed in so many different places. They MUST address fundamental needs of people.

8. You earned the Tier I Canada Research Chair Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience in 2004. What

is involved in this position? What social responsibilities does subsequent funding and influence entail?

The Canada Research Chair means that I am freed from other responsibilities to do research. I do not have to teach. I teach every other year because I love to teach; I do not get paid anymore to teach. I do not have to run my conference, and I do not get any more pay for running the conference. The conference is for the general public. It is transformational for the people who go to it and it has a ripple effect, helping many more people than just those who attend. Every single person of the 700+ attending gave it a standing ovation at the end. For the last two conferences (2010 and 2013) 98% of attendees gave it an outstanding review. The effects reach medical practice, educational practice, and parenting. If you go to my website, you will see several different social service things that we are involved in. For the conference, I worked hard with people from countries that Canada is not so inclined to

give visas to such as the Philippines, South Africa, or Palestine.

The only child and adolescence psychiatrist in Gaza emailed me that he was coming to the conference. He was all excited. Two weeks later, he emailed me, very disappointed, that his institution had spent all of its travel funds for the year. I emailed him back right away, “Do not worry, you can still come. We will not charge you registration for the conference and between the Arab-Muslim and Jewish communities in Vancouver, each will raise half of the funds for your travel expenses.” Of course, I had not asked anybody yet. So now, I had to ask people! (Laughs) People were great. They raised the money. Jews outside of British Columbia (BC), even as far as Israel, sent money.

About 6 weeks before the conference, I received another concerned email from the doctor in Gaza. Obviously, there is no Canadian embassy in Gaza or anywhere in Palestine. So his visa had been sent to the closest Canadian embassy – the one in Cairo –

but there was unrest in Egypt and Canada had closed its embassy in Cairo. Also, he was supposed to fly out of Cairo but the border between Gaza and Egypt had been closed because of the unrest. The wonderful, wonderful man who was the Representative of Canada in Ramallah (Hussein Hirji) arranged for the doctor's visa to be sent to Tel Aviv, but Israel, bless its heart, would not allow a Palestinian to go from Gaza to Tel Aviv to pick up the visa and back. So Hussein had it couriered from Tel Aviv to Sami Owaida (the doctor in Gaza). Then I had to quickly change Sami's flight to go out of Amman, Jordan, instead of Cairo. But he needed a visa to enter Jordan. All of that happened and he was at the conference! (Laughs)

It was great. One of the big topics at the conference was trauma. In particular, the ways to recognize unusual signs and how to try and help people recover. It is hard to think of a place where there have been more traumatized people.

9. What do you consider the controversial topics in your field? How do you examine the controversial topics?

One controversial topic is, what EFs are - if they are distinct or all one? Whether EFs can be improved in children, and how, is controversial. In addition, there is a lot we do not know such as the optimal timing of programs to improve EFs, how long programs should be – in terms of months/years and in terms of how long a single session should be. Many of the programs that have worked have had multiple components. There is disagreement about whether we should try to discover which discrete part is most responsible for the benefit, or whether it is a gestalt and trying to study individual features in isolation would be the wrong way to go.

There are disagreements about how to interpret behavioral findings on EF tests. Exactly, why did somebody fail or succeed? There are disagreements about most

everything. So in that sense, most everything is controversial.

10. What do some in opposition to you argue? How do you respond?

Sometimes, it is an empirical question. We respond by saying, "Let's do a study together." I did that with a colleague from England. We published in 2013. He was right. I was wrong. We say this in the paper. Sometimes, it is very clear that they are wrong, and they are just being stubborn to say what they say, because the data so clearly show they are wrong. I try to say that, but it usually falls on deaf ears.

Sometimes, we, alone, will try to do a study to answer the question empirically. It may at times send me back to the drawing board to re-think things.

11. What advice do you have for young psychologists?

I think that they should follow their heart, what excites them, and not worry about whether they will get a job or even tenure. Sometimes, they think that they

should study x because x is more marketable. I do not think that they should worry about marketability. I think they should follow what really is their passion. And the opportunities will come from that because they will do the best work in what they are most interested in doing. There is no best time to have kids. If somebody is waiting to have kids until there are no pressures or the right time; there is no right time and there always be pressures. You might as well do it.

There is no point in holding a grudge or being ungracious. There is no point in making enemies. Let things roll off your back, and to just be kind and considerate to everybody, even if someone has not been that way to you.

12. Whom do you consider your biggest influences? Could you recommend any seminal or important books/articles by them?

Jerry Bruner, Pat Goldman-Rakic, George Goethals, Robert Swearer, Elliott Stellar, Jim Stellar.

13. In an interview with Dr. Elizabeth Loftus from In-Sight Issue 2.A, I quote an acceptance speech for an award from the AAAS for Scientific Freedom and Responsibility. In it, she said, “We live in perilous times for science...and in order for scientists to preserve their freedoms they have a responsibility...to bring our science to the public arena and to speak out as forcefully as we can against even the most cherished beliefs that reflect unsubstantiated myths.” How important do you see criticizing ‘unsubstantiated myths’ in ‘perilous times’ for Science?

I wonder if that was done during President Bush, seriously, because he would say things that were not true. There were political ads by “Swift Boat Veterans for Truth” that were full of lies first against Senator Max Cleland from Virginia, a Vietnam veteran who was paraplegic, and they challenged his patriotism and military duty. After that, they did to the same thing against Senator Kerry when he was

running for President. What they said were lies, just lies.

A lot of times, if you look at the discussion section of a scientific paper, what is said there is not substantiated in the results section. Oftentimes, what people will say in the press, or a discussion paper, is unsubstantiated, even though they make it sound like it is substantiated. That is very serious, a very serious problem.

I think it is very important to speak out against lies, to speak the truth, and to stand up for justice and what is right. It is important to speak up when scientific findings are ignored or mis-used.

Prime Minister Harper is making it difficult for scientists in the federal government here to get the truth out. If he disagrees with the truth, they are not supposed to publish it. That is a huge problem.

14. I noticed in conducting a rather large literature review with a professor from the University of the Fraser Valley, in some of our research for environmental

psychology, the discussion on the great level of lobbying involved in environmental issues.

Look at fracking, the evidence is that it is bad. We should not allow fracking. However, there is so much money coming from the industry that the material is not coming through. President Obama supports fracking now, and he is a good man. I think if he saw the evidence, he would change his mind. It is a huge problem. People claim x, y, and z is evidenced-based. That a, b, and c are not. Even though, the evidence shows the reverse.

Emile Durkheim said, 'Words really are not nearly as powerful as we thought. They do not really have the power to persuade you if your mind is set against it. The only time words have power is if you were already sort of inclined to think that way.' If you were not inclined in that way at all, words will not likely persuade you.

15. Regarding Durkheim's statement, this might support more foundational education. For example, rather than a smart group of people selecting the appropriate thoughts and ideas for everyone in their education, you have students learn the tools for effective reasoning.

Right! You want people who can reason, problem-solve, can think, and can use executive functions.

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DR. SUSAN BLACKMORE

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Dr. Susan Blackmore is a freelance writer, lecturer and broadcaster, and a Visiting Professor at the University of Plymouth. She has a degree in psychology and physiology from Oxford University (1973) an MSc and a PhD in parapsychology from the University of Surrey (1980). She no longer works on the paranormal. Her research interests include [memes](#), evolutionary theory, consciousness, and meditation. She practices [Zen](#), campaigns for [drug](#) legalization and plays in her village samba band, [Crooked Tempo](#).

Sue Blackmore writes for several magazines and newspapers, blogs for the Guardian newspaper and Psychology Today, and is a frequent contributor and presenter on [radio](#) and [television](#). She is author of over sixty academic articles, about eighty book contributions, and many book reviews.

Her [books](#) include *Dying to Live* (on near-death experiences, 1993), *In Search of the Light* (autobiography, 1996), *Test Your Psychic Powers* (with Adam Hart-Davis, 1997), *The Meme Machine* (1999), *Conversations on Consciousness* (2005), [Zen and the Art of Consciousness](#) (2011) and [Consciousness: An Introduction](#) (a textbook, new editions 2010 and 2011). Her work has been translated into more than 20 other languages.

She has two children and lives in south Devon with her husband Adam Hart-Davis.

ABSTRACT

In this interview with Dr. Susan Blackmore, she discusses her youth and personal heroes; her early philosophical framework and subsequent changes to it; Ph.D. thesis entitled *Extrasensory Perception as a Cognitive Process* and the findings therein; Journal of Memetics and memetic research; her TED talk given in February, 2008 on the topic of memes; controversial topics in psychology and parapsychology; the definition of free will; the illusion of free will; the three Ds influencing her: Charles Darwin, Richard Dawkins, and Daniel Dennett, and William James; and general advice for young academics.

Keywords: Memes, Temes, Psychology, Parapsychology, Philosophy, Biology, Memetics, Meme Machines.

1. In brief, how was your youth? Did you have any personal heroes growing up?

I think two biology teachers I had, which I did not realize at the time, but looking back they were a gay couple. They were lovely. They inspired me to know biology and to understand what life is. We are talking about the 1960s, when I was at a ghastly boarding school, which I absolutely hated. They did inspire me. But Miss Bayliss said to me, “You know, Biology is nearly finished. We have really done nearly everything that we need to

do in Biology. That is not the science of the future. The science of the future is going to be psychology.” That’s why I went into psychology and physiology rather than biology at university, but it is kind of funny when you look back at what happened to modern biology! (Laughs) I do not regret that at all. That’s why I love biology. I still do.

2. How would you describe your early philosophical framework? Did it change? If so, how did it change?

I think false memory is probably relevant here. It is terribly hard. (Laughs) I can remember things about my philosophical and scientific ideas as a child, but whether I am really accurately remembering them – I do not know. As far as I can tell, I was always interested in deep scientific questions. What is light? What is heat? Why does water run downhill? What does it mean for something to be heavy? I can remember seeing splashes of water and wondering about it. My father used to clean out our pond once a year. I used to collect all of the newts. It was really interesting because nearly every year there were always 42 or 43 newts. I wondered if they were the same ones or different ones. Basic kinds of question that scientists ask. I wondered about bees and birds in the sky. Did some supernatural power keep them up? I always had a faint interest in supernatural forces that science did not particularly understand. That was when I was

older, probably as a teenager. I had an interest in that stuff.

I guess another side of philosophical thinking is religion. I was brought up as a standard Church of England kid. I went to a Methodist boarding school. My parents were Christians. My dad was not much of one, but my mom was very serious. I used to have huge arguments with her about the existence of god. I had various phases in my childhood of being very skeptical of god, the afterlife, heaven, and so on. All of these kinds of things. I used to really annoy my mom with this stuff. Oddly enough, I was probably an atheist by the time I left school. However, I had religious phases again. And I think, the one I particularly remember, when I fell in love at the age of 25 and got married within a very few months. I was ‘head-over-heels’ in love. We both had a religious phase at that time. And we both got married in church. I suppose it was this transcendental feeling of love that lured me into being religious

again. It did not last. Quickly, I became an atheist again. It was the last of my religious phases. I began to find other ways to have a spiritual life other than religion. I have been pursuing what I call a spiritual life ever since

3. You did early work in your academic career in psychology and physiology. You moved into parapsychology for some time. For your parapsychology Ph.D. thesis, entitled *Extrasensory Perception as a Cognitive Process*, what did you find?

Ha! I did not find what I expected to find. I was doing physiology and psychology as my degree at Oxford. And I loved it! I was interested in the science, what little was then known about how the brain, memory, perception, and so on, works. In my first term, I had this extraordinary ‘out of the body experience’ (OBE). Based on this experience, I just uncritically thought there was telepathy, clairvoyance, spirits, precognition, and anything seemed possible given the challenge of that experience to the science that I was

learning. I decided at that moment – then and there. I am going to become a parapsychologist. I wanted to prove all these phenomena to my “closed-minded” lecturers at Oxford. (Laughs) Even then, during the experience, and in the weeks and months after it, I remembered the sense of reality, “Yes, but, it would still all be.” The sense of reality, the vividness of it, the sense of rightness, and the ineffable noetic quality, “I know this is more true, more real than anything I have ever experienced in my life.” That quality kept coming back and I did not know how to understand it. Reflecting on my foray into parapsychology was a 10, 15, (laughs) 20 year ‘wild goose chase’ off in the wrong direction. Subsequently, my Zen practice and meditation - and the explorations of the illusion of self and free will – are connecting with the depth of that experience in a way that parapsychology did not, and never could. To answer your question, what did I find? I developed a grand theory of the paranormal –

of memory and extrasensory perception, I set out to test this theory in terms of experiments on telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, psycho-kinesis, and I never found a single phenomenon! And then I tested tarot cards, and I kept on, and on, and on. I never found any evidence of any paranormal phenomena. To keep a long-story short (Laughs), in the end, I came to the conclusion, which I have now, I cannot prove they do not exist, but am sure as one can be –not 100%, that they do not exist. It was a long, long journey. And you might say a waste of time. I would not say that. It was very interesting. And if such phenomena existed, it would be really, really important.

4. You worked on the Advisory Board of the *Journal of Memetics*. What is the state of memetic research?

I am not sure if there is anything worthy of the name ‘memetic research’. It is quite interesting. I still strongly believe thinking about cultural evolution in terms of memes is

the right way to go about it. All of this man-made environment - all of our culture - is a mass of information competing to use our brains to get itself copied. The power lies in these memes to evolve by variation and selection. Therefore, memes, we human meme machines, are constantly constructing new memes out of old ones. Varying them in different ways and then selecting amongst them. Some thrive and others die off. It seems to me to make sense of the extraordinary world around us. To make sense, to my mind, the horrible speeding up, the endless speeding up, of how much stuff we are bombarded with – how much difficulty we have in choosing among it. It is choose, choose, choose, our brains cannot take it! I feel memetics is the appropriate way to understand this phenomena. I am in such a tiny minority. There is something about the word meme, which people do not like – something about the idea of memes that people do not like. That includes ordinary

people and scientists, who shy away from it endlessly. There is a lot of research in cultural evolution. Some of that research looks very close to memetics. Some of it is by people who absolutely reject memetics. The journal that you mentioned ceased publication. There has not been any replacement. It maybe some time before the light dawns and people realize that this is really the way to go.

5. From the previous question, you define genes as the 1st replicator; memes as the 2nd replicator. You gave a TED talk on the ‘3rd replicators’: memes. What are memes? How do they work? Do you envision the future with a *Journal of Memetics*?

I was contacted out of the blue by someone from NASA to contribute to a collection on cultural evolution in the cosmos. The only example of cultural evolution is on the Earth, but I thought, “What would it mean to have cultural evolution on other planets?” We know of lots, and lots, of other planets out

there. Many of them in the ‘goldilocks’ region such that you could think of some kind of life evolving. What would it mean for other forms of life - completely different on distant planets? That set me thinking. The ideas that I came up with go something like this. First, a replicator appears. Something with the appropriate resources around it will get copied. That’s what we mean by a replicator. Some kind of information that is copied. This is copied with variance, and the environment will select some variants over others. So you have an evolutionary process going. That’s standard universal Darwinism. That’s just what happens, and must happen indeed – if the chemical situation is right. What happened on Earth? We may have an RNA precursor. We are not sure of the earliest stages. But we ended up with genes as the first stable, long-term replicator. All life on this planet depends on the evolution of genes. That’s the first replicator on Earth. The second

replicator came about because one of these creatures, gene machines – creatures created by genes for the replication of genes, one of these creatures became capable of replicating information in a completely different way. Early humans were able to imitate sounds, gestures, making stone tools, lighting fires, wearing clothes, whatever those early memes may have been, when those creatures became capable of copying information with variation and selection, a new replicator was born!

To have a replicator, you have to have copying with variation and selection. With human imitation, you have that. That's what we mean by the second replicator called, by Richard Dawkins, memes. I began to think, "Could there be further replicators after that?" I have been worrying for a long time about the status of information on the web, the emails we send, and all of the information we send. I wonder, "Is it really in our control? Did we really construct all these

machines for our own benefit? Or are we deluded into thinking it is for our benefit? Could it really be for the memes' benefits? Is it still memes if it is not us directly copying it? What if the machines started copying stuff without us knowing about it?" I thought, "Aha!" By the sorts of definitions that I am using, then if there is information that is copied with variation and selection by machines outside of our control, then there is a third replicator. I gave that the name techno-memes or 'temes'. I think 'thremes' would be a better name. Unfortunately, it is difficult to change the name now. These are technological memes. Information, digital information, that is stored, copied, varied, and selected by machines. Now, are there such things already? For the moment, you could say that most of the information out there, certainly the stuff seen on our screens, is dependent on us. In the sense that we do the selecting, or do we?

When we put some terms into google, google has a lot of say in the things that come up. It has a lot of amazingly clever algorithms based on who we are, where we are, and so on. What about the varying? There are lots and lots of programs constructing variance out there on things by taking things out, reconstructing it, and sending it out. We are still doing much of the varying and so on. However, it is certainly not beyond the bounds of possibility that it is information out there that we are not seeing being stored, copied, varied, and selected entirely by machines. I would term that memes.

It is extremely worrying in that it will be using the space in these machines. These machines require an awful lot of planetary resources. They put out an awful lot of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere for the sake of replicating. If it got really, really up and running as a new replicator, the first thing we would know about it might be something like dark energy – it would be dark

information. The servers are using a lot of energy but we don't know where it is going because the information is not interacting with us. So we can't see it. Anyway, that was the type of wild speculation that I was led to. In terms of the original question that I was asked in the first place about cultural evolution and the cosmos, I thought, "You are not going to get planetary communication between civilizations based on only having genes or a second replicator. You would need a third replicator, where information could be stored in machines that do not require air to breathe and food to eat in order to communicate from one planet to another." So we would only be able to see other civilizations out there if they had got to the third replicator stage. If they had, in my opinion, it would be dangerous because every time another replicator comes along it is dangerous for the planet. In the sense that when genes arrived, the atmosphere changed. When memes arrived, humans

changed, the brain got bigger. It is hard to sustain, but we pulled through. If there is a third replicator now, maybe, we should be optimistic and say, “We will pull through!” Or maybe, we should be pessimistic and that is the reason we do not hear from other civilizations. Anyway, that is what my TED talk was about. I throw out ideas for other people to think about, and see what happens.

6. In psychology and parapsychology, what do you consider the controversial topic(s)? How do you examine the controversial topic(s)?

As far as parapsychology is concerned, I do not think there are any controversial topics. I think it is doomed to failure. It is not to say, “People should not be doing it”. I am really glad people are doing it because endlessly people believe in telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, and so on. All of these kinds of things. People are continually having experiences they don’t understand. So they

leap to the wrong conclusions, just as I did all those years ago. We can now understand those experiences without inventing the paranormal. Of course it would be very important to science if there really were paranormal occurrences but I do not think there are. Parapsychologists will carry on searching but will have the same disheartening experience that I had, but let them try.

In psychology, what *really* interests me at the moment, we have all of these kinds of ideas about ourselves that are basically wrong. We feel as though we are a self, experiencing the world that has to make all of these decisions, but these things do not seem to be true based on the way the brain works. Therefore, the question is, “Why are we so deluded?”

7. You argue free will is an illusion. By your line of reasoning, what type of free will are illusions? If any, what kinds of free will seem implausible, but possible, to you?

I like to define free will in the ordinary, everyday, *human* sense that I can by my own conscious thoughts – my own conscious decisions - cause something to happen independently of the state of my genes, memes, environment, brain state, and so on and so forth, that is what people mean by free will. They mean, “I did it!” Not, “My brain or genes did it!” I am not going into all of the many sophisticated definitions. This kind of free will does not exist. In this ordinary sense of the term, we do not have free will.

8. If you had sufficient funding and complete academic freedom, what would you research?

I would have to think about the implications of it. If somebody ‘out-of-the-blue’ gave me the money, I would study the physiological effects of meditation. I think we have only just begun to study the capacities of the human brain for self-control, for changing itself, for learning to be in different states without taking drugs or being hit in the head

with a hammer. The capacity to see through the illusions of self, free will, consciousness, and so on. That is being done, and has for a long time been done through meditation and mindfulness. We are only beginning to understand the things going on inside of those brains that undergo those very, very profound changes in terms of the self. Probably, if somebody did (laughs) force upon me lots of money, I would probably throw myself into that.

9. Who most influenced you? Can you recommend any seminal books/articles?

The three Ds: Darwin, Dawkins, and Dennett. Darwin is obvious.

Dawkins is obvious. The selfish gene is the book in which he invented the idea of memes, but I think a lot of his work shows the wonder of how the varieties and splendor of life arise out of purely mechanical information-based evolutionary processes is wonderful! Although, he does not leap into changing his life through meditation or

anything. He does not take it into the direction that I have taken it. Nor has he gone on exploring memes that way that I like to do it.

Now, of course, there is Dan Dennett. And I would say, the book that has most influenced me is his 1991 book, *Consciousness Explained*, which still more than twenty years on makes points that most scientists in the field of consciousness studies simply do not understand. He explores all of the traps that we fall into such as imagining the little ‘self’ inside, who is experiencing this stream of consciousness. He replaces this with the Multiple Drafts theory, which is so difficult to understand. I explain it again, and again, and again, to my students. Only some of my students understand it. I check with Dan to see if I understand it the way he understands it. I think I do understand it. It is *so* counterintuitive. I agree with him. If we are to understand consciousness, we have to throw out our intuitions. Intuitions about self

and consciousness because it is all illusory. It’s all not how it seems to be, we get it wrong all of the time. We fall into all of these traps. So that is the most wonderful book. Unfortunately, I part company with him in his book *Freedom Evolves* because I think the book should be called *Choice Evolves*. As we evolved as more complex creatures and created more complex environments, we have to make more choices, but those choices are made based on what goes on inside of our brains, the genes we have, and all of those reasons. Not because of something called free will. Not because our will is free. I think the grounds of our disagreement are that he takes a much more sophisticated view of free will. He says, “There is the magical idea of free will, which people believe in. Obviously, it cannot be true. So let’s have a different one.” But that is the one that matters. The one where I can magically choose for no other reason that I want to choose it. That’s where we part

company. I think Dan Dennett's views are still the best. And that the people involved in consciousness studies ought, at least, to consider their intuitions. I believe they are leading astray the science of consciousness studies.

However, Dan Dennett, like Richard Dawkins, has no interest in the spiritual life. He points out these illusions and traps that we fall into, but he does not then say, "Right! Let's try live my life in a way that overcomes those." For me, I stumbled across Zen a long, long time ago and have practiced meditation and mindfulness for years. I discovered through that a systematic way of training yourself to drop the illusions of self, consciousness, and free will. It is a long, long tough haul.

I would add one more: William James. My only other hero that does not begin with D. *Principles of Psychology* from 1890 by James. It's something like 1,200 pages in two volumes. I read it all. I read lots of parts of it

again, and again, and again. I have a first edition, which is annotated with lots of scribbles! It is the only book that I possess which I love. I physically love the book! His ideas are so subtle and interesting. Way ahead of his time! He was considering what kind of entity this illusory self might be, fascinating man. I would recommend the *Principles of Psychology* and the *Varieties of Religious Experience*. He did, unlike the three Ds, wonder about religious and mystical experiences as I do.

10. And gave them book-length treatment.

Yes, indeed!

11. You are the mother of two children, Emily and Jolyon. Both are professional academics. In this, your advice for young academics is concrete. What advice do you have for young academics?

It still amazes me that both of my kids are academics. It does not terribly surprise me that Emily would be because she was always terribly clever and had that kind of mind. She

is doing very well. Jolyon was, as a child, much more interested in art and building things. He would be down the cellar making stuff. All the sudden, in his late teens, he started to get interested in science. I guess, he was in a scientific family. It was around him all of the time. It took off at that time. I am glad that I did not push them into any particular direction or career when they were young. I thought, “Okay, that is what they are interested in.” Perhaps, I was too interested in my own life and work. (Laughs) Jolyon as we speak is off in Africa doing research on camouflage in birds and having a very good academic career. However, in another way, I think, “The academic life now is so pressured, competitive, stressful! I hesitate having anyone go into it. Except that, it is the best way to pursue one’s scientific curiosity.” That is, perhaps, the only way to seriously pursue one’s scientific curiosity. If you are curious like me and that is what you want to do, then my advice to young people, as it has always

been, “Do what you are really interested in. Follow the questions that are burning in your mind. If you do not have those questions, then do not be an academic because it is awfully tough!” (Laughs) If you love something and really want to know the answers, you will work hard and enjoy it. But if you do something because it is the ‘trendy’ thing, your parents tell you to do it, or you will earn more money, no good at all. ***Do what you love and do it well.***

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APPENDIX I

Poem courtesy of Dr. Azra Raza, M.D. from Columbia University & *3QuarksDaily*

As you set out for Ithaka

hope the voyage is a long one,

full of adventure, full of discovery.

Laistrygonians and Cyclops,

angry Poseidon—don't be afraid of them:

you'll never find things like that on your way

as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,

as long as a rare excitement

stirs your spirit and your body.

Laistrygonians and Cyclops,

wild Poseidon—you won't encounter them

unless you bring them along inside your soul,

unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

Hope the voyage is a long one.

May there be many a summer morning when,

with what pleasure, what joy,

you come into harbors seen for the first time;

may you stop at Phoenician trading stations

to buy fine things,

mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,

sensual perfume of every kind—

as many sensual perfumes as you can;
and may you visit many Egyptian cities
to gather stores of knowledge from their scholars.

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.

Arriving there is what you are destined for.

But do not hurry the journey at all.

Better if it lasts for years,

so you are old by the time you reach the island,

wealthy with all you have gained on the way,

not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.

Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.

Without her you would not have set out.

She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.

Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,

you will have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.

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