

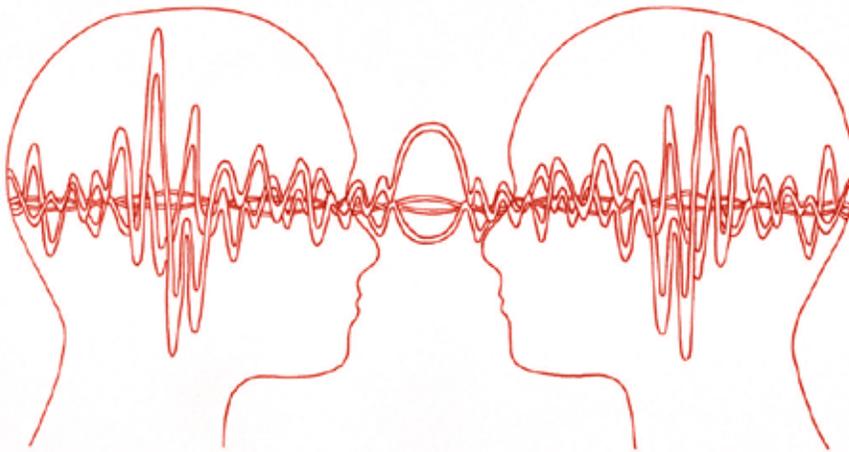
Faculty Matters

Views and News of Douglas College Faculty Association Members

Number 12 Fall 2018

Evaluation of Faculty by Students: The Iatrogenesis of Quantitative, Psychometric Methods for Obtaining Feedback

BY DR JEREMY JACKSON, PHD, PSYCHOMETRICS



In a recent decision, the Ryerson Faculty Association won a case against Ryerson University in which the arbitrator concluded that student course surveys should not be used to measure teaching effectiveness. In his written decision, the arbitrator, William Kaplan, stated that the evidence presented by the Faculty Association against the validity of student surveys was “virtually uncontradicted.”

Mr. Kaplan went on to say that:

“It bears repeating: the expert evidence called by the Association was not challenged in any legally or factually significant way.”

In our own stand against the use of student “course evaluations” at Douglas College, the psychometric case that our survey is not a valid measure of course quality has already been clearly made. We have established that our own “course evaluation” is not a valid measure of teaching effectiveness, and thus should not be used by administrators or faculty to judge teaching performance or course quality. The case that has been made against our own course evaluation (known as the CEI) is a technical one relating to the validity of psychometric instruments as measures of broader constructs like performance and quality. In this article, I would like to change the approach we have taken thus far and explore in more detail two non-technical but equally important reasons to be cautious about the use of student surveys in post-secondary education.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

INSIDE

Evaluation of Faculty by Students

Dr. Jeremy Jackson 1

From the Editor

Elizabeth Hicks 2

The Cheating Business

Graham Rodwell 4

Treaty Power or Power Politics?

Jaime Yard 6

Candy Palmater - Keynote Speaker

Jennifer Kirkey 7

Building High Participation Unions

Stephen Crozier 8

Teaching Marx

Robin Wylie 10

Reflective and Critical Reading for Educators

Don Valeri 11

The Gender Divide

David Moulton 13

People and Propaganda

Wilhelm Emilsson 15

Breathing is the New Smoking

16

Democracy or Democrazy

16

DOUGLAS COLLEGE
FACULTY ASSOCIATION

700 Royal Avenue
New Westminster, BC, V3M 5Z5

P: 604-527-5166

F: 604-520-1496

www.dcfa.ca/facultymatters

FACULTY MATTERS
Number 12, Fall 2018

FACULTY MATTERS is the
newsletter of the Douglas
College Faculty Association.

FACULTY MATTERS COMMITTEE:
Bryan Nadeau
Stephen Crozier
Graham Rodwell
Sam Otim
Charles Odoom

FACULTY MATTERS EDITOR:
Elizabeth Hicks

LAYOUT & DESIGN:
Cody Klyne

The views expressed are those of
the individual writers and do not
necessarily reflect the position of
the Association. Contributions are
welcomed and can take almost
any form: letters, reports, reviews,
announcements, etc. All copy received
will be edited for length, clarity, and/
or stylistic conventions. Submissions
should be sent electronically.

FACULTY MATTERS is published at
least once a semester, and more, as
needed.

FACULTY MATTERS is printed at
Douglas College. FACULTY MATTERS
thanks the entire printshop staff for
their continued outstanding work.

© 2018 Faculty Matters

Printed on recycled paper.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Feedback vs. Evaluation

Feedback and evaluation are two fundamentally different processes that should be used for entirely different purposes. Confusion of the two is very common and often leads to egregious misuse of psychological assessments. Although we might not recognize this distinction explicitly when it applies to surveying, it is a fundamentally important part of what teachers do when they administer tests to students. Generally, teachers provide two kinds of assessments on the tests they administer. These are the test score (or some transformation of this score into a percentage or letter grade); and written or oral commentary on aspects of the student's work. The former is evaluation, the latter is feedback.

Evaluation implies standards against which the evaluation is to be made. When we evaluate others, the consequence of the evaluation can be favourable or unfavourable. As such, evaluation is closely related to judgment and so has potentially harmful consequences for the person being evaluated. It is for this reason that evaluations are generally feared and disliked. But it is also for this reason that evaluations have power. Evaluations motivate action as a consequence of the fear of failure they engender.

Feedback on the other hand is oriented towards development, growth and improvement. It is not numerical in nature, and so does not usually entail a quantitative standard against which a person is to be judged. Feedback is usually detailed, specific and designed to help. It offers the promise of improvement and hope for a better outcome. It is for this reason that feedback is generally not feared but openly solicited. We want help to get better and so seek it, and are thankful to those who take the time to give it.

From a technical point of view, what matters about this distinction is that the concepts, theory and methods of validity apply only to evaluation. It is evaluations that can be invalid measures of the phenomena they claim to measure, not feedback. Although the CEI is called an evaluation, it is actually a combination of evaluation and feedback. The numerical Likert-scaled items are evaluatory, and the open-ended comments section provides the opportunity to give feedback.

From the Editor

BY ELIZABETH HICKS, COMMERCE & BUSINESS

It appears our long, hot summer is over, and we are now back to our usual "liquid sunshine," as well as, of course, starting another semester.

Here is our latest edition of Faculty Matters (FacMat) for your perusal. As usual, we have a wide range of articles, ranging from cheating (as a business) to Jeremy Jackson's opinion of the student "course evaluations" to book reviews and reports on conventions and seminars.

Thank you to my FacMat committee: Graham Rodwell (H&SS), Sam Otim (CSIS), Charles Odoom (ECON) and especially Steve Crozier (former DCFA VP Negotiations), who again have worked long and hard on this edition. Our thanks also to all the contributors - as you know, without you there wouldn't be a FacMat!

And of course, despite the fact that opinions expressed by the contributors are their own, please let us know if you have any comments.

Enjoy!

Liz

What has been established in the Ryerson case and in our own arguments against the CEI is that such evaluations are not valid measures of course quality or teacher performance. What has not been recognized is that most surveys of this type contain both an evaluatory and a feedback component. Feedback, of course, is not only of one type. Feedback can vary anywhere between helpful, uplifting and supportive, to diminishing, belittling and harmful. On occasion, students (and sometimes faculty) lack the appropriate combination of qualifications and maturity to appreciate the difference and so can and do provide feedback that is hurtful and discouraging.

Recently, I had occasion to photocopy some work in the faculty workroom and a faculty member had taped one of our "course" evaluations to a table next to the copier. On the evaluation was written, exactly as follows, "The worst (sic) prof ever, I want my money back." The things we say to people in person and on surveys can hurt them, sometimes very badly. Sometimes students say things to instructors that humiliate, insult and abuse them. Sometimes they say things that demotivate them, sometimes they say things that make them resentful, and sometimes they say things that make them angry. Sometimes students say things that end careers and sometimes they say things that do even worse.

When we provide opportunities to give feedback, we provide an opportunity not only to help but also to hurt. For this reason, it is appropriate to be cautious when providing opportunities for people to pass judgment on one another within organizations. When we provide students with a forum to provide feedback about their instructors, we provide them with an opportunity to do harm. Since our own CEI does this, it represents an opportunity for students to do harm to instructors. The harm can be immediate and direct, such as a written insult in the comments section of a survey, or the harm can be indirect, embedding itself in the deepest recesses of organizational culture. Although the direct, immediate implications of harmful survey feedback are obvious to most, it is often not so clear how survey feedback can harm organizational culture and the relationships between people within organizations.

Surveying vs. Listening

Surveying is not listening. Consider the now common biennial employee survey. In this method, a quantitative style, psychometric survey is administered to employees once every two years. Responses are tabulated, reports and power-point presentations that contain graphs and recommendations are developed, and promises for change are made. Normally, it takes many months for the organization to respond to the results of such surveys. Usually, the response is a sort of project-managed initiative administered to groups rather than individuals. Follow-up with individual employees about the results is rare, evaluation of the effectiveness of initiatives designed to achieve improvement is rarer still, and immediate, direct response to individual concerns is, given that such surveys are anonymous, non-existent.

Listening is not like this at all. To demonstrate that what someone has to say actually matters, one must listen carefully and reflect back what has been said to show that the message has been heard and understood. One must take others seriously and reflect continuously on what they feel and what one might do to help. Listening is an active, ongoing, reflective process. It's a process that takes time, energy, care, and consideration. Listening is personal, individual, thoughtful and kind. Listening breeds respect, loyalty and trust.

Now consider our own CEI. In our CEI, we ask students a few sterile questions and force their answers to conform to a shallow 1 to 5 Likert scale response. The survey is administered online, not in person. We calculate means and standard deviations of responses given by a small percentage of students about whom we know almost nothing. We recommend action on the basis of numerical results that we do not understand¹ (see end of article) and that have unknown relevance to the opinions, needs desires or aims of the individual students we teach. All of this is the antithesis of listening. It is psychometrically invalid "measuring."

There are, of course, many other systemic, harmful consequences of psychometric style surveying but, in my experience, they all reduce to the same issue in the end. Surveying is not listening; it is, at best, "measuring." And since we all respond much more positively to being listened to than measured, surveys are almost never the best way to establish a culture in which people feel as if the organization actually cares about what they have to say.

So, although the intention of a survey might be a good one, the method can demonstrate exactly the opposite of what it was designed to achieve. A method is iatrogenic if it causes the problem it was designed to address. If we think that surveying is listening, we are likely to stop listening in favor of surveying. Although the survey might initially be undertaken as a method to demonstrate the value of feedback, it may, in fact, limit feedback. The cure, so to speak, may create the disease. In this case, that would be the disease that afflicts organizations when the people within them would rather conduct surveys than listen to each other.

To consider one last example, imagine using a modern, psychometric style survey method to suggest to your family and friends that you care about what they have to say. Imagine asking your spouse, once every two years, how s/he feels things are going and presenting him/her with graphs and tables of figures to justify your response to his/her concerns. Imagine the effect on the culture of your marriage. Imagine what s/he would think about how much you care.

Err on the Side of Listening not Surveying

In my experience as an organizational consultant, I have seen how easy it can be for surveys to drive a wedge between the surveyor and the surveyed. I have seen the eye rolling and frustration of employees to yet another survey that promises more than it can possibly deliver. It is because of these

experiences that, in my own teaching, I have decided to err on the side of listening to my students, rather than asking them to fill out surveys about my courses or me.

For listening to be effective, students need to feel safe enough around us to tell us the truth. If and when it is appropriate, we should ask our students about their hopes and dreams, what they fear, what they aspire to, and what we can do in our limited capacity to help them with all of that. Once they trust that we care about all of these things, they will tell us what they really feel. Only then will their feedback be fully helpful to us. Only then are they ready to speak and are we ready to listen. And we should listen whether our students inspire us to listen or not. The great challenge of helping is not merely to listen; it's to listen when we are given a hundred reasons not to.

There are a lot of reasons not to listen to each other in the modern post-secondary environment. The challenge is to care about the people we work with and listen to them despite all of these reasons. Taking feedback seriously, speaking with people honestly, and finding ways to help others when it seems impossible are at the heart of any honorable approach to feedback.

So let me then finish with an invitation to all faculty and administrators listening. Join me in finding ways to speak with and listen carefully to each other. Email a colleague, sit

down with a leader, talk to a student. Don't go for coffee with your friend in the office next door; you already know what they think. Go for coffee with someone who struggles with a different problem than the one you face. Listen to them, get back to them, show them that you care. Let us all demonstrate to our students how speaking and listening to each other makes the places in which we live and work better places to be.

“Let's DO respect. Listen more; judge less.” 

Imagine an instructor has removed one particularly difficult chapter from the required course readings in the winter semester of a given year. Imagine now that we would like to use the quantitative CEI results to understand the effect of doing this and whether the results indicate that said chapter should be eliminated indefinitely from the course readings. Imagine the results to the question, “Did you find the course materials helpful?” scored on a 1 to 5 Likert scale were as follows: fall semester: mean=3.9 and standard deviation=.6, winter semester, mean=4.2 and standard deviation=.9. Imagine response rates in the fall and winter were 23% and 38% respectively. Should we remove the chapter indefinitely? If you think the answer is “yes”, then you do not understand survey results sufficiently well to use them as a basis for decision making about your courses. Even more interesting is that if you think the answer is “no,” the same applies. The correct answer is that these results are insufficient evidence for making decisions about course materials!

The Cheating Business

BY GRAHAM RODWELL, SOCIAL SCIENCE



There are now signs that the support for academic cheating by students is starting to change from a cottage industry to a global business, using increasingly advanced internet-based tools. Recent articles in the *International Journal for Educational Integrity* have highlighted the lucrative activities of online sites that contract to write assignments, that use software designed to simulate paraphrasing, and that facilitate cheating and fraud in examinations. According to

Brendan O'Malley in *University World News*, “The digital revolution in cheating has already begun.”

Although custom writing websites are still probably just a small part of the overall cheating business, they are expanding rapidly and have become far more mature, with sophisticated marketing and business practices. Cath Ellis, the Associate Dean of Education at University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Sydney, analysed a small sample of just under 50 of the many hundreds of bespoke writing sites and concluded that many appeared to connect to a few global businesses with well-developed quality control processes.

Students no longer have to search far for these opportunities. A BBC report in May 2018 found that over 250 YouTube channels were promoting a Ukrainian site called EduBirdie (<https://edubirdies.org/>) which is linked to a Canadian site: <https://ca.edubirdie.com/>). Edubirdie says that

it will write anything from an admissions essay to an assignment to a whole thesis. An assignment essay ‘starts at just C\$24.15 a page.’ They offer quick turnaround, unlimited 24/7 support, double checking and satisfaction guarantees. As a consequence of the BBC report, formal complaints were made to YouTube, who removed most of these videos. But EduBirdie used the situation to generate more publicity, saying on its Facebook page that the BBC had confirmed that it was the most popular writing service in the world (<https://www.facebook.com/edubirdie>).

According to Sarah Elaine Eaton, of the School of Education at the University of Calgary, “Canada ranks among the top four countries from which students place online orders for completion of academic work.” Based on student survey data, she estimates that around 71,000 students (3.5%) who are currently enrolled in

college or university in Canada have already engaged in some form of contract cheating.

A quick Google search reveals a wide variety of free tools that will paraphrase a text without a student needing to understand the meaning. Most of these free tools produce an awkward and often barely comprehensible version of the original. But it can be difficult to distinguish their output from the writing of students with poor English skills. More recently, a new breed of applications, such as Cleverspinner and SpinnerChief5, has emerged with the ability to reconstruct complex sentences according to grammatical rules. The results of these more sophisticated applications are even more difficult to detect. The algorithms currently used by plagiarism software such as Turnitin are not adequate for this purpose.

Although the development of new internet-based businesses may have created a new impetus, fraud and cheating in examinations have a long, global history. There have been political crises associated with widespread corruption, fraud and exam cheating at different times and in different countries. In 2010, after hundreds of students of the Baccalaureate exam in Romania submitted the same answers, 280 teachers and students were prosecuted. By 2012, following the introduction of CCTV cameras in exam rooms, the pass rate had dropped from 80% to 43%. In 2014, an investigation into scores from English language tests taken at British test centres run by a US multinational company (<https://www.etsglobal.org>), found over 29,000 invalid results and more than 19,000 questionable results. According to Isha Jain in the Times of India, attempts in the northern province of Uttar Pradesh to prevent practices such as impersonation, the leaking of exam papers and the systematic distribution of chits, resulted in a substantial reduction in exam attendance this year. In Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, this February, the owner of 19 private colleges was caught supervising a virtual cheating scam involving the substitution of completed exam sheets.

While these are merely the latest examples of a worldwide tradition of organized exam cheating, internet-based companies have created new opportunities for students. Websites such as testbankster.com, testbankview.com, solutiontestbank.com and testbankteam.com will sell students the test bank for most current textbooks together with the answers. Websites such as Coursehero.com allow students free access if they share their own course materials, often including completed exams and assignments. If they are prepared to act as a 'tutor' and help complete the exam or assignment of another student then they can earn money. According to Coursehero, their website provides course materials for over 20 million courses. Coursehero sells itself as a resource to support learning, but the business model is built substantially on the creation of cheating opportunities. A similarly ambiguous approach is taken by Koofers.com and Chegg.com, which has recently moved aggressively to buy StudyBlue and Cramster in order to become a leading provider of 'textbook solutions.'

This August, students taking the SAT in the U.S. discovered that it contained questions from the International SAT given in October 2017. These questions, together with the answer key, had already been leaked and shared widely online, especially in China and South Korea. The National Association for College Admission Counselling, in the US, has called for the elimination of the common practice of reusing standardized tests because of 'modern communications technology.'

Although the academic goals of Coursehero and Chegg may be ambiguous, there are many websites that are explicitly marketed as a way to cheat in online exams. These include Examonlinehelp.xyz and Boostmygrade.com, which even offers to take an entire online course in place of a student. To try and protect against this, some post-secondary institutions have contracted with virtual proctoring services that use software to detect cheating. These proctoring services vary. For example,

Proctorfree uses webcams and facial recognition software. ProctorU uses screen sharing to observe all computer activity together with behaviour analysis. Honorlock has its patented cell phone detection technology. Because the reputation of online universities is threatened by exam cheating, institutions such as the Western Governors University (www.wgu.edu) claim that this software is completely effective. But there are reasons for being a little skeptical about this claim. Firstly, there are many anecdotal stories of 'false positives.' For example, online exams may be stopped when a student looks out of a window or reads a question out loud. Secondly, new web sites have appeared that claim to be able to get around this proctoring software. For example, Onlineclassking claims that its 'specialist PhDs' are able to take a ProctorU exam on behalf of a student (www.onlineclassking.com).

As cheating starts to change to a global, internet-based business, individual instructors are less able to detect and monitor the results. Lists of useful suggestions for instructors are available. For example, Ann Rogerson, in the International Journal of Educational Integrity (2017), has suggested how 'clues' can be discovered that identify 'irregularities' in written assignments. But not only do many of these suggestions increase workload, they also leave a considerable degree of ambiguity in the findings. It is hard to believe that an ambiguous finding of cheating would survive an internal appeals process or a legal challenge. Individual faculty caught on the front line of conflicting claims might reasonably decide that the emotional and time costs are too high to pursue their suspicions.

Each year, the Academic Center for Academic Integrity (<https://academicintegrity.org/>) organizes an International Day of Action against Contract Cheating. The Day of Action this year is on October 17th. Last year, 76 Institutions, including Simon Fraser University, participated. As far as I know, Douglas College is not planning to take part this year. But perhaps this will change in 2019. 

Treaty Power or Power Politics?

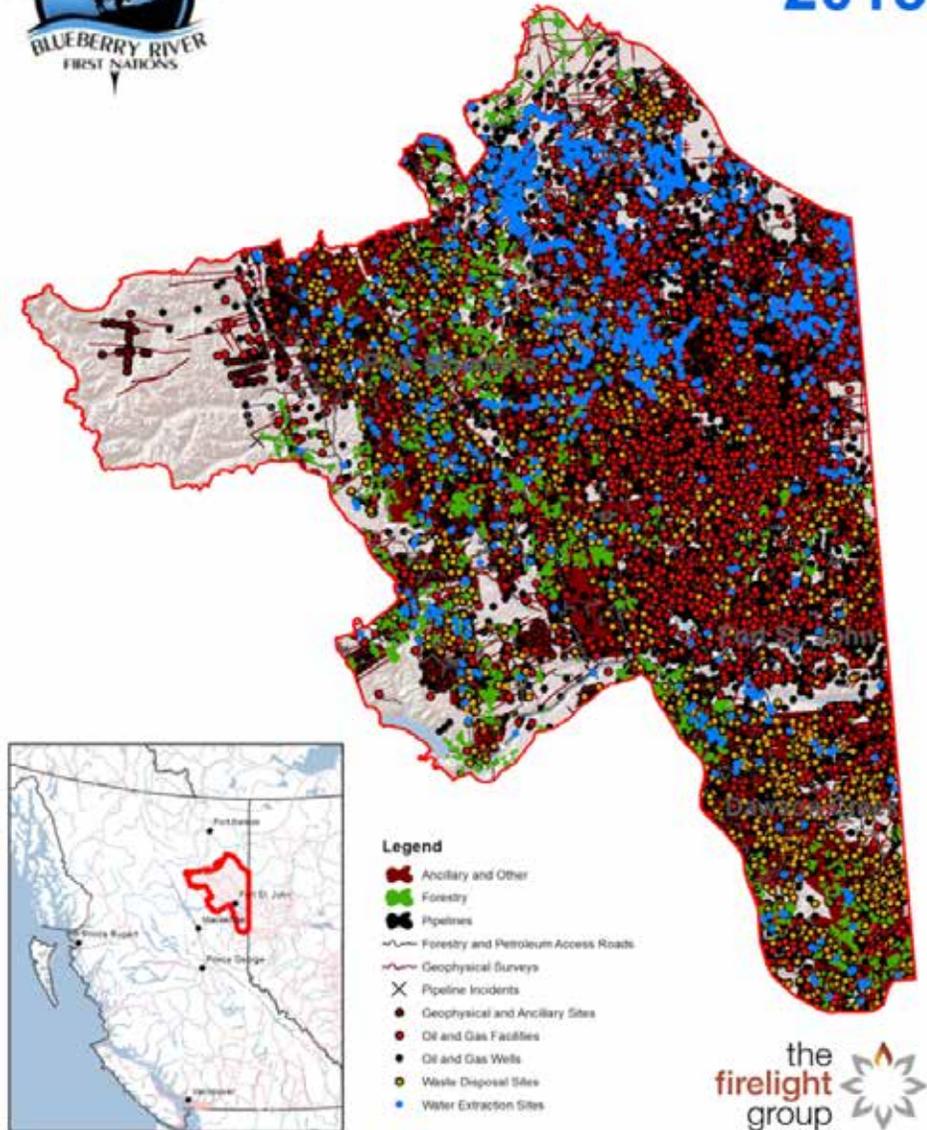
BY JAIME YARD, DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

A fundraiser to support the court challenges being brought by the West Moberly and Prophet River First Nations against the controversial Site C dam was held at the Aboriginal Gathering Place on the New Westminster Campus this past July 5th. A packed house came out to learn from speakers including Gordon Christie, Peter A. Allard School of Law Professor; Julian Napoleon, Dane Zaa land activist and Caribou Herd Restoration Project leader; Adrienne Peacock, Douglas College Department of Biology Emeritus Faculty; authors Wendy Holm and Sarah Cox, who have both penned books opposing Site C. Mae Burrows, Emeritus Douglas College faculty, and Rita Wong, Fight C organizer and Emily Carr Instructor, were the MCs for the evening. Dave Seaweed and student assistants from Aboriginal Student Services provided a traditional welcome and vital assistance in promoting and hosting the event.

Christie provided an informative overview of the promises made to Treaty 8 First Nations and the contours of interpretation of the “taking up” clause of the treaty, which stipulates that the Crown can infringe upon the treaty “saving and excepting such tracts as may be required or taken up from time to time for settlement, mining, lumbering, trading or other purposes.” This clause has been used by the Crown to push industrial development ahead in the region. In his talk, Napoleon demonstrated the damage that such “taking up” has caused to local land and habitat. He further emphasized the close political and family ties of the many First Nations that access and live in the Peace River Valley, including Doig River, Dane Zaa, Beaver, Cree, West Moberly, Prophet River, Blueberry River Nations, and others. He emphasized that “[c]olonial law separated us, but we are one people, connected to our lands and to each other through



Industrial Development 2015



Red dots: Oil and Gas Facilities **Black dots:** Oil and Gas Wells
Yellow dots: Waste Disposal Facilities **Blue dots:** Water Extraction Sites

centuries of intermarriage and sharing the land.” Rounding out the talks, Peacock highlighted objections to the dam, stemming from geological stability and alternative energy sources for the future of the province. Overwhelmingly, the talks painted a picture of a province caught in a sunk costs fallacy and an antiquated interpretation of treaty law. Sadly, the faulty logic that has kept Site C moving forward was echoed by BC

Hydro’s lawyers in the BC Supreme Court Case heard between July 23rd and the 27th in downtown Vancouver. I attended a few days of the trial with some of the Douglas College event organizers including Rita Wong, Mae Burrows, and Adrienne Peacock. The West Moberly First Nation is seeking an injunction on dam construction through the courts while cumulative impacts of a range of industrial and

infrastructural developments and their possible infringements upon Treaty 8 are assessed.

When Treaty 8 was written in 1899, no one could imagine fracking, tar sands, or a province on fire due in part to global warming. While West Moberly's lawyers set out a case that clearly demonstrated infringements upon treaty rights and carefully highlighted the exaggerated financial impacts of BC Hydro's submissions (both in terms of costs already incurred and potential employment promised by Site C), BC Hydro's lawyers submitted an argument to the Supreme Court that attempted to fix hunting, fishing and trapping rights at the turn of the twentieth century, and in within Western property law that favours exclusive and exclusionary access. Their case has been called out by the Union of BC Indian Chiefs who issued a statement declaring that the BC Hydro case was a blatant display of disregard for traditional protocols and knowledge and that "[t]here can be no lasting reconciliation while Indigenous peoples' rights are being trampled

upon, diminished, and frozen in the past. There can be no trust in your government while the words you say to the public ring false in the court rooms where Crown corporation lawyers perpetuate neo-colonization." (The full statement by the Union of BC Indian Chiefs about the July Supreme Court Case can be read at https://www.ubcic.bc.ca/upholding_commitments_to_reconciliation.)

The province of British Columbia says the courts "have not yet considered whether it is possible for treaty rights to be infringed through 'cumulative impacts' to specific, defined areas." To get a sense of the cumulative effects faced by Treaty 8 nations, a map of industrial development in the region is instructive (see Figure 1). Produced by the Firelight Group, an anthropological consulting firm that works closely with many First Nations in the province, this map clearly illustrates just how brazen the Crown has been in "taking up" lands and resources within Treaty 8 territory. Considering the number of extractive projects, it is hard to believe that habitat and species population

health will remain steady and/or recover from the cumulative impacts already incurred in the territory, but stopping Site C is a necessary step in that direction.

As most of us know, from the perspective of present and future energy needs in the province, there is no need for this dam. It's time to lick our provincial financial wounds and move on to better sources of employment in BC than neocolonial dispossession.

The July 5th event was filmed and is currently in post production. Please contact me (yardj@douglascollege.ca) if you are interested in the film for classroom use or other distribution.

Looking to get more involved? Fight C, one of the coalitions organizing against Site C, has been holding weekly actions in solidarity with the Peace Valley every Friday from 12pm to 2pm at David Eby's constituency office in Kitsilano, 2909 West Broadway. For more information contact: witness4thepeace@gmail.com. 

Candy Palmater – 2018 FPSE AGM Keynote Speaker

BY JENNIFER KIRKEY, PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY



Candy Palmater

The theme of the 2018 FPSE AGM was "Mobilizing our Power - Together for an Equitable Future." Candy Palmater was one of the keynote speakers and her presentation nailed that theme on the head. I knew it was going to be a good speech as I already knew about Candy from Canada Reads 2017 and CBC comedy shows. The pleasant shock to

me was how many of the people in the room were moved by her, including lots of the "tough older union guy who has seen it all and heard it all" demographic. I do not ever remember so many people stating "wow, that was great" after a keynote address. It was the highlight of the AGM for many of us. She made me laugh so hard my ribs hurt and I was not the only person in the room who had to wipe away a few tears. Candy Palmater is a gay Mi'kmaq actor, writer, comic, and activist. She graduated valedictorian of her class at Dalhousie and went on to practice labour law. Candy is a recovered lawyer turned feminist comic.

Her speech was about hope, redemption, the power of one and power of many. My words cannot convey the power of her presentation. If you ever have a chance

to hear her speak, then I urge you to do so. I have recommended her to a number of professional development committees here at the College. Here is a long quote from her website:

"Candy can speak on a variety of topics. The core of her presentation, however, always centres around her key message of love, kindness and self-acceptance. Through personal stories, from her very fascinating and unique life, that she relates to whatever audience she is in front of, she gently offers an alternate way of perceiving the world. From front line workers to heads of industry and government, she leaves individuals feeling empowered to make a difference that can help change the work place and the world." (<http://www.thecandyshow.com/>)

In addition to being a multiple award-winning TV and radio personality, Candy has executive-produced three films on Mi'kmaq culture. She was on the Canada

Reads 2017 panel where she passionately defended "The Break." Candy has a new podcast, Sweet Talk with Candy Palmater, and Harper Collins will be publishing her

first book in the spring of 2019. You can find details at <http://www.thecandyshow.com/>. 

Building High Participation Unions: You Decide

BY STEPHEN CROZIER, ELLA INSTRUCTOR

In further preparation for bargaining, this past June, the Federation of Post Secondary Educators (FPSE) held a two-day workshop conducted by union organizer, author and scholar Jane McAlevey. Like her keynote speech at the 2017 FPSE AGM, the title of the workshop was Building High Participation Unions.

From day one, McAlevey stressed that high participation is the prerequisite to power. This is not unlike Woody Allen's assertion that 80% of life is showing up. Of course, having a goal and doing something to achieve this once you arrive is, one might guess, the other 20%. At any rate, we can be quite certain that those who are not present in some sense of the word have no power.

Secondly, she distinguished between two roles that unions have: servicing and organizing. Servicing is the part unions play when employees are having trouble with management. Also, it is doing such things as going to meetings with management to ensure that potential problems for employees are prevented. The service side of unions is transactional: you pay your dues and you get your ... due. So unions are, in part, organizations that provide services for their members; however, unions are also organizations that ... organize. This is about reaching out to members, keeping them informed and motivated, and expecting that members will, in turn, reach back. McAlevey stated that usually only 10% of union members are active. Imagine the power a union might have if 80% of its members showed up.

Core Concepts

Jane McAlevey also introduced five core concepts. First, she distinguished between "self-selection" and "structure." Basically, talking to those who have self-selected is preaching to the choir. She



Delegates to the 2018 AGM: In Solidarity!

used the women's March and Occupy Wall Street as examples. You won't get an argument in those camps; participants have self-identified as members. But when it comes to building the structure of an organization, not everyone is a believer. You must talk to people and convince them, and this might not always be comfortable since often members of a large organization are unwavering in their cynicism. Since on average only 10% of members are active through self-selection, another 70% must be convinced to be part of the structure, at least if Woody's participation requirement is to be satisfied.

Next, she spoke of leaders versus activists. You may wear a button saying, "Management Sucks," but if, after a few years, you're the only one wearing the button, you might be an activist, but you are not a leader. (Actually, you might even be showing up for the wrong activity.) Quite simply, leaders are followed. If a leader puts on a button, everyone puts on a button. Well, maybe not activists! However, if a union can get its activists and its leaders working together, 80% isn't out of reach.

The difference between majorities and minorities is pretty clear, but McAlevey says that, when organizing, majorities in all areas are preferable, not just an overall majority. The first goal is to get 55% of members to agree on a particular initiative. Then you aim to increase this by 5% till you reach your goal of, hopefully, a super majority. What is a super majority? Woody Allen would say 80%.

The fourth concept takes into consideration the whole worker and community-labour alliances. We know that there is more to us than the work that we do ... don't we? But does the union know that and act accordingly? Put another way, do we act this way toward each other? We are all colleagues in the DCFA as well as instructors at Douglas College. Do we share what unites us? Do we appreciate our differences and support each other? This view is looking inward, but the flipside is looking outward to our community. Do we see and appreciate the connection between our issues and those in the community around us? Do we articulate this connection in our community?

Finally, McAlevey distinguishes between organizing and mobilizing. Organizing is

building the union, whereas mobilizing is activating the members. There isn't much to mobilize if you haven't organized, which is something for us all to think about heading into bargaining. Are we organized? Jane suggested that social media can be used to mobilize, but it isn't much good for organizing. Of course, social media was integral to the success, rather questionable in hindsight, of the Arab Spring, but those participants self-selected. Everyone believed! Once everyone believes, social media can be used for mobilization. However, organizing, building structure, is a face-to-face process. It's about "conversion" through conversation. Once sufficient structure has been achieved, social media is a valuable tool for mobilizing.

Do Structure tests

Jane McAlevey believes in wall charts which list every member and indicate with colourful stickers the different union activities members have participated in. These charts are democratizing and engaging since all members have a visual representation of where the union is strong and where it is weak. They can then build strength from the grassroots. Each time members are asked to participate in an action, be it signing a petition or showing up at a bargaining meeting, it increases their buy-in. These are called structure tests because they test how strong the structure of the union is. If you see few stickers on your charts, your membership isn't sticking together.

McAlevey's advice is to start off with involvement that is low risk, say having a member sign a card in private supporting a union initiative. Next, circulate a petition where members can see the names of others but only the union sees the result, so that only the union knows if the petition is successful or not. Finally, you can go public with a photo poster of active members, but not till you have 75% (80% according to Woody) buy-in by your membership.

This process socializes members to risk, which is important since union activity has always involved risk, especially if a union's structure is weak. Fundamentally,

unions are about shifting power, and people tend not to want to relinquish power. For this reason, McAlevey advises starting privately and moving increasingly into the public eye. Initially, it's important for a union to maintain confidentiality to protect its members so that the "boss" cannot divide and conquer. For example, if a union has a T-Shirt or a pin day before building sufficient structure and very few participate, it does two things. First, it tells the boss that not many are very interested in the initiative and, secondly, it identifies the few that are interested and often subjects them to discipline of various sorts. In such a case, not only does the initiative fail, but union success itself is put at risk. However, once a critical mass of active members is achieved, openness is preferred. At this point, instead of members being targeted, the boss is put on notice that he or she, or at least his or her power, can be targeted.

McAlevey offered a few tips for structure tests. First, petitions should be short, 2 or 3 sentences, and unifying. Don't choose issues that are controversial among members and don't include all the facts in a petition. Make them simple and quick to complete. Don't go public till a union has 75% support for an initiative. Finally, and most important for the DCFA and FPSE going into a bargaining year, use negotiations as a structure test. Jane suggested a goal of having every worker sit and observe negotiations for at least an hour. These members should rotate, so that the other side of the table understands the depth of support, the structural strength, they are confronting. This gives the bargaining team significant power.

You Gotta Believe!

Of course, not everyone does. In fact, there are often "organic" leaders in unions that really don't value unions. Organic leaders aren't necessarily the people with titles, but their actions and words carry weight. After all, most of us are followers. If an organic leader says, "The union sucks," chances are so do others people in that department.

If the organic leader is not a believer, talk to her last. Gather information about her

from activists and acquaintances in the department. You've only got one shot at "converting" a leader. If after you take it, she says, "You suck," you're unlikely to convert many others in the department.

Who Am I?

Jane McAlevey stresses the importance of having a grassroots organization based on an appreciation of the whole worker. This being the case, as a DCFA member, you should ask yourself why you became a teacher. Why did you choose Douglas College? Is the present governance structure supporting the reasons you became an instructor and the reasons you chose to teach at Douglas? Finally, if you could change one thing at work tomorrow, what would it be and how would you go about making that change?

The solidarity of the DCFA can and should support our roles as teachers and support us in making positive changes to our college. Being union members and being instructors go hand in hand. We are not one or the other but both ... and we are the DCFA.

Building Community Support

McAlevey says that community is key. Again, looking at ourselves as whole workers, we are all part of various communities with different community connections. We should take the union to the community. Those personal connections to community, whether they are through service clubs, sports teams, political organizations or community groups, will get us support letters for our issues. After receiving these letters, we should not forget to send thank you letters to community leaders with lots of our signatures.

At the Table

Jane McAlevey is a strong proponent of "high participation" union negotiations. Her recommendation for small bargaining units with a couple of hundred members is to have one person on the bargaining committee for every 15 workers. For larger units, she suggests one for every 25 workers. According to this advice, the DCFA should have 25 or so members on our bargaining committee.

Although she encourages rather large bargaining committees and recommends that each member of the bargaining unit observes at least one hour of the negotiations, she by no means advocates a lack of discipline at the table. In fact, the larger the group, the tighter the organization to bargaining must be. She has three rules for behaviour at the table:

- Maintain a poker face at all times.
- Only the chief negotiator speaks unless otherwise planned.
- Send notes to the chief negotiator at any time. Have lots of paper for this and don't hesitate to pass notes for a caucus, especially if the negotiator makes a mistake or clarification of a point made by management is advisable.

McAlevy also encourages open communication to members. The bargaining committee should have an agenda for each day and bargaining updates including pictures and quotes of the day should be posted on a website or

otherwise distributed.

Taking it Home/Making a Plan

In summing up the workshop, McAlevy gave us several suggestions for building high participation unions:

- Have activists and/or position holders (area stewards and executive council representatives) run an organic leader ID exercise.
- Develop a credible "plan to win." Order and/or make wall charts.
- Start prepping lists for wall charts.
- Make up a draft contract survey.
 - Start with open-ended questions on the first page.
 - Rank issues inside.
- Launch structure test #1: a survey.
 - But it's not just a survey.
- Plan structure test #2: a majority petition.
- Plan structure test #3: majority petition or a majority photo poster.
 - But not until you can turn a

super-majority petition around in five days.

- Don't build the workplace organization around "meetings;" build it around action.

Oh, yes! I almost forgot. It is very hard for Canadians, but we should stop saying "thank you" to each other for participating in the DCFA. (I think "excuse me" is still okay, eh?) Thank you implies that we have done something for the other when, in fact, doing union work is helping ourselves as much as anyone else. We can encourage participation by expressing how good it is to see members attending meetings and events, but "thank you" is out. You must decide how important union participation is to you.

Conclusion

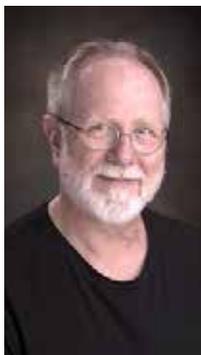
A student cannot succeed with 10% participation. Can our union? You decide.

Thank you for reading my article and I hope to see everyone out to all future DCFA meetings and events. 

Teaching Marx

BY ROBIN WYLIE, HISTORY

The Anthropology/Sociology Department hosted a unique teaching opportunity this summer with a presentation and discussion on 'Teaching Marx' with Mark Leier, History Professor at Simon Fraser University.



Mark Leier

Mark is the author of a number of studies about British Columbia's early labour radical groups such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) who pioneered inclusive unionism among ethnic groups in BC's resource industries. He also teaches a fourth year seminar about Marx and the writing of History.

Leier began his discussion by stating some questions about teaching Marx such as: Why study Marx? Which Marx (or his evolving politics)? Who are the students and what methods are most effective?

The answers he has come to reflect both context and the many ways students connect with Marx as historian and social critic. Mark noted how students have been motivated to explore Marx more carefully since the 2008 financial crisis - as students come to rely more on work and debt to support their studies. Mark has found that Marx's writing on alienation has been a good starting point, as a way to reflect on students own wage work. As well, F. Wheen's biography and the film 'Young Marx' are ways to bring Marx and Engels into the realm of lived lives and

not just august, impersonal figures.

In discussion, some faculty members talked about the importance of Marx from an explicit anarchist libertarian point of view as a necessary critical voice in social theory - regardless of 1991.

In my teaching experience, students have found Marx's economic argument about how one's work is defined as a commodity, as labour power (that you are paid to reproduce yourself rather than getting a share of the new value created), and their political experience as young radicals in the German revolution of the 1840s and their support of the Paris Commune in 1871, to be quite stimulating. And, in terms of 1917, what exactly were Lenin and Trotsky's arguments as grounded in Marxist ideas? And what about Mao

versus Liu Xiaobo (2010 Nobel prize winner who recently died in a Chinese prison)?

Though, to be honest, anarchist thinkers like Blanqui, with his attack on private property, have also drawn student enthusiasm/horror. Even ancient history rests on competing models of

interpretation, between modernization and modes of production ideas. Back in the 1970s Marxism also impacted explanations of aboriginal oppression (Howard Adams) and working class Canadian history.

Leier concluded our discussion by drawing insights from his experience:

that Freire's model of applied educational methods can complement formal methods (i.e., projects that are based on students' experience meant to build one's power) and, for the 1970s generation of radical thinkers, we have to be open to how this generation will find meaning in Marx. 

Reflective and Critical Reading for Educators

BY DON VALERI, BUSINESS

If you are wondering what is happening to college and university education today, you might consider reading one or more of the following works: *iGen; Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood*, by Jean M. Twenge, Ph.D., *What's Happened to the University? A Sociological Exploration of its Infantilisation*, by Frank Furedi, and *Academic Freedom in an Age of Conformity* by Joanna Williams.

Twenge is the author of more than 120 scientific publications and has written several books on her research, *Generation Me*, and *The Narcissism Epidemic*. Her latest book explores in depth the internet generation (igen), those born between 1995-2012, and have grown up in a world where the internet has always been there. Based on longitudinal scientific data and personal interviews of igen Americans, Twenge charts the new normal of the current generation now entering colleges and universities, and is a must read for anyone interested in young people and technology. The book is easy to read and full of data supporting her opinions. Here are some of her findings:

- Teens are lonelier than anytime measured since 1990.
- The igen spend less time with friends and more time on iphones and this has led, in Twenge's opinion, to more unhappiness and depression, less sleep, and a rise in suicide rates.

- There has been a decline in religious service attendance.
- A decline in binge drinking (a good thing).
- There has been a rise in a dislike in doing dangerous things or taking risks and, therefore, igen members are less likely to want to start their own businesses.
- SAT scores have declined, especially in writing and critical reading.
- Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to go to school has declined, based on the belief that what they are learning is irrelevant to their lives and future careers.
- Igen is more focused on practical things, less attracted to fame, and more likely to favor logic over emotions than Millennials and others before them (another good thing).

Citing sociologists Bradley Campbell and Jason Manning, Twenge opines that the US has shifted from a culture of honour, in which people respond to a perceived slight themselves (microaggressions), to one of victimization, in which people avoid direct confrontation and instead appeal to third parties and/or public shaming to address conflict. Ironically, they want college administrators to be like their parents, who from a child's perspective are seen as all powerful. Ever wonder why students now complain to a dean or administrator, or RateMyProfessor, rather than seek to resolve it with you as an instructor?

Their addiction to technology however is what stands out most profoundly. Their parents are more blameworthy than perhaps anyone else, for using technological devices as babysitters and serving as horrible role models. Recent reports show that US adults spend two-thirds of their waking hours, about 11 hours a day, staring at iPhones, computer and TV screens. Is it any wonder that teenage boys spend 11 hours a week playing video games? Twenge's conclusion is that the "devices they hold in their hands have both extended their childhoods and isolated them from true human interaction. As a result, they are both the physically safest generation and the most mentally fragile."

Furedi's work is a more serious academic work and drills down into some of the same themes that Twenge raises. What Furedi focuses on is the pervasiveness of a systemic doctrine of expansive victimization. He argues that universities have come under the influence of powerful paternalistic and intolerant trends. The values of experimentation, risk taking, and openness to new ideas, which influenced campuses in the 1960s and 1970s, have given way to a climate of moral regulation and conformism, a paternalistic etiquette that dominates campus life. Outwardly it projects itself as nonjudgmental and open minded, while in practice it promotes an intolerant approach through the language of political correctness. Rhetorically, it preaches the value

of diversity: in practice it refuses to tolerate a diversity of opinions. As proof, look at the furore and outrage that Jordan Peterson evokes, whether you agree with him or not.

According to Furedi, the origins of this development go back decades. For example, Millennials, as opposed to previous generations, found it more difficult to flourish in the less structured environment of higher education and to make the transition to independent living on campuses. Another trend most of us have seen is the sense of entitlement, which Furedi argues resonates with a culture where children and young people expect to be insulated from pressure by adult society. More importantly, young people are encouraged to interpret their existential problems and confusion through the medium of psychology. Anxiety therapy and pharmaceutical medicalization are therefore needed by students in institutions of higher learning. Safe spaces and trigger warnings (of ideas and opinions which could upset the overly sensitive), behind which students can hide, are expected by younger students and are accommodations for which faculty now have to be ready. Increasingly, students feel that they should be spared the hassle of having to talk to peers who do not share "their closely held beliefs." Debate and controversy are dangerous because they can be a source of psychological harm.

The principal characteristics that are said by students to typify a safe space often run counter to the practices and values that are central to the enlightened traditions of an academic education. Academic teaching and learning involves exploration, questioning, debating and risk taking. As Furedi points out, none of these activities are "safe," and they often lead students in uncomfortable directions. Instead of affirming, they force people to confront their limitations, ignorance and irrationalism.

Another consequence of the "safe space" policy is that it runs against the grain of critical thinking. The downgrading of the role of judgment fosters a climate where members of the academic community are discouraged from criticizing and constantly questioning each other's views and ideas. People likely to possess uncomfortable ideas are more likely to keep them to themselves. Worse yet, the demand for paternalistic intervention is an outcome of a process of socialization that cultivates among the young an attitude of eternal dependency. Educators focus on the socialization of students rather than teach content and substance. This dependency is supported in Anglo-American universities by a shift in employment away from faculty to administrators. In 1975, in the US, there were almost twice as many professors as administrators; today the administrators outnumber the faculty.

Lastly the concept of academic freedom has been devalued through the sanctification of the value of "not offending." The convention that certain words and ideas that offend students must be regulated, the "offending" person even punished, is now widely endorsed and institutionalized throughout higher education. If this is what these institutions have become, how far are we now from Orwellian Newspeak? Some college professors, however, are pushing back and requesting students to sign a contract requiring that they not condemn without knowing, dismiss without reading, judge without understanding, harangue without listening or politicize without tolerating. And if the student is triggered by free speech, the free exchange of ideas, or people who express and defend ideas or opinions other than their own, or feel entitled to censor the thoughts or words of others, then it is suggested that the student drop the class. What is horrifying here is that a small repressive minority, backed by supine administrators, is now dictating what freedom of expression means in our colleges and universities.

If you are interested in academic freedom, then Joanna Williams's book is a must read. It is a heavier work but does offer a vigorous defence of academic freedom. The biggest threats to academic freedom come not from students, business or government, but from scholars who, in seeking to promote academic 'justice' over academic 'freedom,' have encouraged self-censorship, the closing down of debate and the creation of a culture of conformity. Too many scholars, worried about job security, have timorously fallen in line with dominant ideas. To a certain extent, this can be linked to the gradual reduction of tenure in the academy and other neoliberal political pressures put on higher education, such as the notion that higher education should provide a return on the investment it gets from public purse. It has become marketized and the student is now a consumer who must be satisfied, flattered, and appeased rather than challenged. The post modernist rejection of knowledge for its own sake has led some academics to question the possibility of knowing anything.

And if knowledge and what is being taught has no value anymore, what is the need for academic freedom? The public good of higher education lying in knowledge as a search for truth has been replaced by the nihilistic belief that there is no truth. Why bother with the former when you can nurture students' employability and values without it?

Of the three books, Twenge will give you a lot of valuable insights into the newest generation of students entering higher education. It is an easy read with lots of charts. Furedi's book is a profoundly intellectual, but also easy to read, well referenced, and the best of the three. Williams's book is a deeper and more 'academic' work that deals with the demise of academic freedom, something so many academics today foolishly take for granted. It is also a matter that is pertinent to our current collective agreement negotiations. 

The Gender Divide: Certainly Separate but definitely not Equal

BY DAVID MOULTON, MARKETING



Copyright www.thoughtco.com

Shrewed by Elizabeth Renzetti Toronto ON 2018

Women don't ask: negotiation and the gender divide by Linda Babcock & Sara Laschever Princeton NJ 2003

Sharp by Michelle Dean New York NY 2018

Middlemarch by George Eliot London UK 1872

My original intention for this review was to comment on the book *Shrewed* (2018) by Elizabeth Renzetti. This writer has been one of my favourite columnists with the *Globe and Mail* and her book was not a disappointment. But more on this book later.

Then in preparation for a sales class where we were going to focus on negotiations, I came across a book by Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever called *Women don't ask: negotiation and the gender divide* (2003). This book documents both the conscious and unconscious issues that women face when they are in a situation that requires negotiations. It is not a pretty story.

About the same time I came upon *Sharp* (2018) by Michelle Dean which is a collection of essays on a variety of women from the past hundred years or so who have been important and influential writers. Dean provides her assessment of ten women including Rebecca West, Dorothy Parker, Hannah Arendt and Nora Ephron.

While I was attempting the synthesis of these three rather different books, Theresa Kenkel from the Library distributed

The Big Read, a list of the top 200 novels compiled by a survey done by the BBC in 2003. One of the books on the list which I had not read was *Middlemarch* by George Eliot. Eliot was in fact a woman - Mary Ann Evans. This book also had a very decided view of the genders so it was included.

The common theme of the four works is that women have been and are still at a distinct disadvantage in our supposed 'liberated' and egalitarian society.

Whether it is Renzetti recalling her repeated experiences of being groped and sexually harassed, or Babcock and Laschever describing how women do not get the salaries or the raises they deserve because of their gender, or Dean commenting on the roadblocks that all the women in her book faced when they were establishing their careers, or Eliot describing the subservient role that women played in early 19th century England, the story is the same: If you are female, you are at a disadvantage from the day you are born.

Now for the women reading this review this may not come as a big surprise, but for me, a white male, the stark realities of the differences is astounding. It is particularly problematic because in our very middle-class household with a mother, father and two daughters, our girls were led to believe that they could do anything they wanted to do.

Renzetti's book opens with a discussion about how self-talks can be destructive. In her case she refers to it as 'The voice in your head is an asshole' (15-20). This is not a gender issue - we all

have an asshole inner voice that, if we allow it, will wreak havoc on our lives. Then she talks about harassers and recalls a rather comic situation, after the fact, where she yells at a groper who is able to slink away and, after she yells after him, she finds that she was viewed as 'the crazy lady in the subway'(23). The book also contains two letters that are written to her children - one a boy and the other a girl. Renzetti has given a lot of thought to these issues and it is displayed in this book.

With *Women don't ask*, there are numerous examples of the disadvantages that women face when dealing with situations that involve negotiations. There is the situation where they established 'blind' auditions for prospective orchestra players using a screen. The result was a 'full 50 per cent (increase in) the probability that a woman would advance in the audition process' (94). But, again, this is not just a gender issue because resume tests have clearly shown that Caucasian names do much better than any 'ethnic' name when the content of the resumes is exactly the same.

A more illustrative example of the gender bias (by both genders) is the results of the study using the 'Ultimatum Game' as the test. If there is no agreement between the two parties in dividing up \$10, both people walk away empty handed (zero sum). There were two key findings "... that both men and women made less generous offers to female responders than to male, and both male and female responders required much larger offers from women than they required from men to make the offer acceptable" (149-150).

Another study showed that while men exhibit the 'fight or flight' response under duress, women will 'tend and befriend.' It is a chemical response because "... in women the release of oxytocin into their bloodstreams can block the 'fight or flight' response and prompt them instead to reach out for social support (161): thus the term 'tend and befriend.'" This may provide a partial explanation for the reaching out behaviour that some women have exhibited after a sexual assault with their perpetrator.

Negotiations themselves can be viewed through a gender lens: "... the male view that it's a game or a contest and the female view that it's a collaborative undertaking ..." (165). This means that in longer term situations, women are apt to be the better negotiators.

Finally, there was the question that was never posed to me when I became a father, "How are you going to care for your child while you are at work?" The woman who asked this question found that "Her husband was taken aback - he had not considered that this was a problem that he needed to solve." He assumed that "Emma would make whatever adjustments needed to be made..." (182). How many fathers have been asked this question? The answer would likely be very few and even fewer could respond positively.

Sharp has some quotes that need to be highlighted. Rebecca West wrote, "If one is a woman writer there are certain things one must do - first, not be too good; second, die young, what an edge Katherine Mansfield has on all of us; third, commit suicide

like Virginia Woolf. To go on writing and writing well just can't be forgiven" (58).

Nora Ephron's mother Phoebe, who was also a screenwriter, "... told her daughters there were no values in life higher than independence. 'If I haven't raised you to make your own decisions, it won't do any good to tell you what I think' " (231).

And then the quote from Mary McCarthy, "Exceptional women in my generation certainly profited I suppose - without thinking of it that way - from the fact that women in general were rather looked down upon. So if [men] found one they didn't look down upon, they raised her up a bit higher than she might have deserved. I'm enough of a feminist not to like the kind of praise that says, 'She has the mind of a man'. I always hated that" (210).

Dean talks of "Senator McCarthy threatened to call Hannah Arendt up before the House Un-American Activities Committee, but he never did." (122). He never did because he couldn't - he was in the Senate and HUAC was a committee of the House of Representatives. Then later, when talking about Joan Didion in El Salvador, the author comments "... there was little question the Communist government of the country was a regime of terrifying violence. An archbishop (Romero) was shot in the pulpit; massacres were being documented by photojournalists" (225). El Salvador at the time was under a military dictatorship and rife with death squads. There may be many areas where we can criticize the Communists, but this isn't one of them.

We finish off briefly with *Middlemarch* which is set in the early 19th century (pre-Victorian) and dwells on the lives of several families. More importantly for this review, several of the women in the novel struggle with the fact that they may have made poor choices for spouses (of course all male) when they married. There was nothing to do but to grin and bear it. Your only escape was either your death or the demise of your partner. At the end of the novel, most of the problems are resolved but the one male is responsible for more than himself. "Lydgate had accepted his narrowed lot with sad resignation. He had chosen this fragile creature, and had taken the burthen of her life upon his arms. He must walk as he could, carrying that burthen pitifully" (657).

The common denominator to all these books is the problem of gender in our society - yesterday and today. And does any of this give us hope for the future? One would like to be optimistic but the inertia makes it difficult for one to see a path to true equality any time soon. Barack Obama commented recently, "Men have been getting on my nerves lately" (July 2018), and I must agree with him. It is too early to determine if the Me Too movement will flourish in the long term.

However on an upbeat note, I know that I will recommend all the books (other than *Middlemarch*) to our daughters in the hope that they will not have to face some of the systemic biases that many women have faced before them.

All these books are available in the Douglas College Library. 

People and Propaganda

BY WILHELM EMILSSON, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

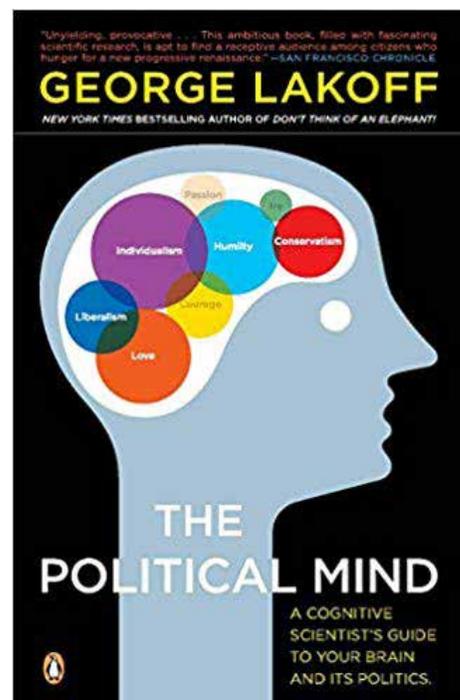
George Lakoff's *The Political Mind: A Cognitive Scientist's Guide to Your Brain and Its Politics* (2009) is an example of how research into the structures and functions of the brain is beginning to have a significant impact on our understanding of human thought and action. Lakoff claims, and backs up his claim with evidence from neuroscience and a sensible qualification, that the "science of mind has lit up a vast landscape of unconscious thought—the 98 percent of thinking your brain does that you're not aware of." Lakoff understands the resistance to viewing thinking in terms of neural activity, what he calls an "embodied" view of the mind, but his premise is sound. As the biologist J. Z. Young writes in his book *Philosophy and the Brain* (1986): "all intellectual and emotional powers require activity in the brain and we are utterly dependent on it. No brain—no mind, no intellect, no nothing. The clinical evidence does not support the idea that there is some entity or spirit that can exist apart from the brain." In short, the mind is the brain. Furthermore, emotion has a much greater impact on thinking and decision-making than most people realize or are willing to admit. Actual thinking, as opposed to an idealized view of humans as fully rational free agents, is often *reflexive* instead of *reflective*, as Lakoff puts it.

Not surprisingly, this has moral and political consequences. Lakoff points out cognitive biases that distort people's thinking. For instance, a proposal is seen as worth less when a group believes the other side offers it. Lakoff writes that in experiments pro-Israel Americans "saw a given peace proposal as biased toward the Palestinians when told it was a Palestinian plan, but saw the same plan as 'evenhanded' when told it was an Israeli plan." Lakoff's aim is to use the recent knowledge of the brain to

deepen his readers' understanding of politics and apply this knowledge to make advocacy for progressive ideas more effective. Lakoff's advice to progressives, however, is problematic. The irony of his career is that he is a cognitive linguist who warns his readers against falling into linguistic and cognitive traps, yet he himself falls into one of the simplest linguistic and cognitive traps there is, binary thinking and its various manifestations, either-or thinking, us vs. them, etc. In addition, Lakoff's representations of the Enlightenment, Darwinism, and the contrasts between progressivism and conservatism are surprisingly shallow and biased.

Lakoff argues that there are "progressive" and "conservative" modes of thought, but that progressives and conservatives often apply them to different areas of their lives. Then he asserts that there "are no moderates—that is, there is no moderate worldview, no one set of ideas that characterizes a 'centre' or 'moderation.'" This is a dogma that Lakoff clings to without providing any real evidence for it, which is a prime example of his either-or worldview. One of the cognitive traps Lakoff points out is the Hero and Villain narrative. Then he falls right into it by making claims such as the following: "conservatism is destructive to democracy." You can of course be strongly opposed to conservative politics without believing they are destroying democracy, but in Lakoff's binary world, you are either a Progressive Hero or a Conservative Villain.

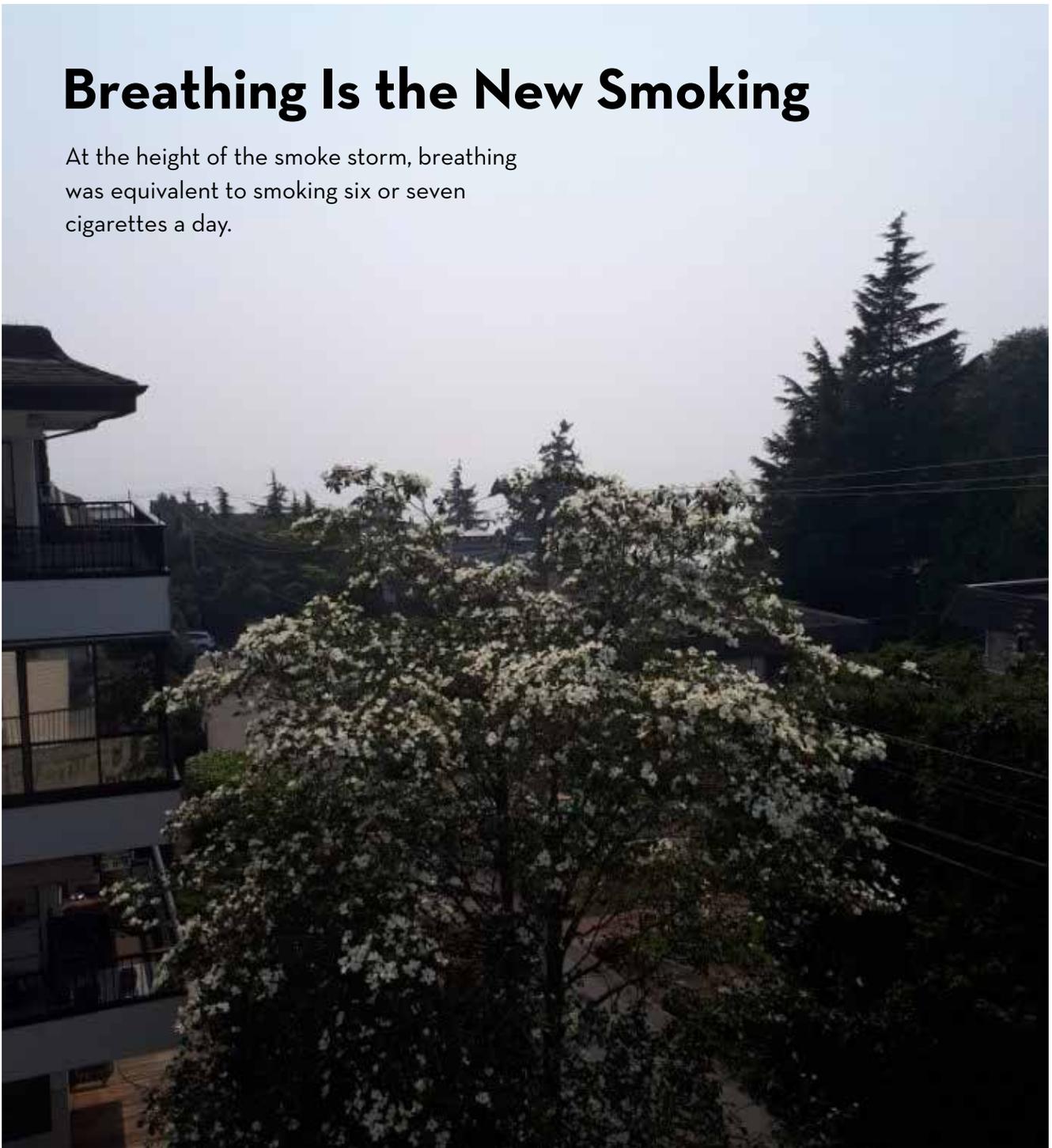
Lakoff generalizes, without providing adequate evidence, that progressives' political rhetoric is more factual and rational than the rhetoric of conservatives. His generalization may, or may not, be true. More importantly, however, he exhorts progressives to be more emotional and polarizing in their discourse than



they currently are. Lakoff only uses the word "propaganda" once in his book, when he frowns on conservative propaganda, but his advice to progressives is simply to build a bigger and better propaganda machine than the conservatives. Lakoff neither acknowledges the damage propaganda does to political discourse nor the fact that while you can fool some of the people some of the time, people are not as stupid as he assumes and that we resent being manipulated and lied to by politicians and political activists. Lakoff thinks he is being scientific, pragmatic, and tough, but his plan to "Make Progressivism Great Again" would only hurt progressives by seriously damaging their credibility in the long run. The last thing democracy needs is a Progressive Pravda or a Liberal Fox News Channel. If you claim you have high moral and political ideals and then turn around and use hyperbole, personal attacks, and selective moral outrage to try to achieve your goals, the people you are trying to influence will see you for the hypocrite you really are. 

Breathing Is the New Smoking

At the height of the smoke storm, breathing was equivalent to smoking six or seven cigarettes a day.



Ocean-View Condominium: Tuesday, August 21st, 2018

Democracy or Democrazy: Will You Vote?

A vote on proportional representation will take place in October. Will 40% of half the voters decide how much your vote counts? Get informed at <https://thetyee.ca/News/2018/07/03/BC-Options-Proportional-Representation-Explained/>