

**Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project**

**Interview with Virginia Douglas**

*Interviewed by Jennifer Bazar*

*Montreal, QC*

*November 26, 2013*

**When citing this interview, please use the following citation:**

Douglas, C. (2013, November 26). Interview by J. Bazar [Video Recording]. Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History and Online Archive Project. Montreal, QC.

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**VD:** Virginia Douglas, Interview participant

**JB:** Jennifer Bazar, Interviewer

\*Note that all material that is **[bolded in square brackets]** was added by the interview participant subsequent to the recording of the original interview.

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**JB** - So the first thing that we usually like to start with is just sort of a formality. If I could just get you to state your full name and your date and place of birth, just for the record.

**VD** - Now?

**JB** - Yes please

**VD** - My full name is Virginia Isabel Douglas and my birth date is January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1927 **[born in London, Ontario]**.

**JB** - Great. Thank you. I've organized the questions in sets of topics so it'll jump a little bit, but I'll try to keep like questions together so that we stay on topic. So where I wanted to start with was some of your influence in clinical psychology training for Canada and so I was hoping you could tell me about - and I'm going to try the pronunciation again *[Laughing]* - Couchichi—

**VD** - Couchiching *[Laughing]*

**JB** - Couchiching *[Laughing]* conference in 1965 and what role you play in those discussions.

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**VD** - Well, you have to remember that psychology in Canada at that time was really fighting for a place in the science world - I'd say science and applied world - and there was, even within psychology, a great deal of friction between those who were committed to keeping it a science, those who were committed to bringing the applied thing along, and those who thought that the two should remain, to some extent, combined within the same departments of psychology. So there had been a conference before at Penticton and that was where they talked about the science side of psychology and the practitioners were dreadfully upset because they'd been left out, the government had sponsored the science one *[Laughing]* the science meeting but we couldn't get money for the applied one. And that

was Couchiching. And a lot of people did a lot of work to get the money and, actually, CPA ended up paying for a lot of the expenses of that and, again, the pure scientists kind of resented their fees going into this new, applied push. But anyhow we had it and I came from McGill where we'd gone through this same struggle and by that time McGill was showing sort of a higher respect for the applied side and Ed Webster, who was an Industrial Psychologist, was running that side and I was asked to represent one model of applied psychology and, of course, I chose the scientist-practitioner model and I was talking about clinical psychology. Other people had industrial, and school, and all sorts of other interests, but all of those applied people got together in one place and talked to each other and sort of formed the nucleus of a push across the whole country of the applied people even though they were an extremely varied group, even within the applied group.

**JB** - And what did you see as the outcome of that conference?

**VD** - I think much more contact and communication among the people interested in applied, some beginning of understanding of each other's perspectives, and a genuine feeling that we were going to push for government support and university support for applied psychology. So that was when all of the applied people sort of showed their presence and their determination to set up this or these fields of applied.

**JB** - And were you there officially representing McGill or was it for CPA, your role, do you remember?

**VD** - No I think at that time I was more representing McGill. We weren't supposed to be representing anything except a position paper on a model and I chose to talk about the scientist-practitioner model.

**JB** - Was there any particular reason that you were drawn to the scientist-practitioner model? Was it the influence perhaps from the United States?

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**VD** - Yeah. I went to the University of Michigan, and at that time the psychology department really had accepted clinical psychology but it also made sure that all students got a thorough backing in psychology as a science. And I found that model very much to my taste. So of course I was coming into McGill where the split between the two had already happened, in that Donald Hebb and all the physiological psychologists and the social psychologists and some of the others thought of themselves as scientists and they let Ed Webster set up this MSc applied programme and I was hired to work in that MSc applied programme. And the only reason I got a job there was because I came in as the wife of a man who was going into the engineering department - so I had to find a job in Montreal. And at that time the Quebec government had given the universities a little bit of money to play with the idea of training practitioners and they hired me with that money [ - a very minimal salary I might add!]

**JB** – Ok. Now, actually building on that a little bit, you also served as Coordinator of the Training Programme in Clinical Psychology at McGill for a number of years – I believe you served two different terms. What changed most about the programme during your terms?

**VD** – Well, it wasn't just during my term it was **[before, during, and after my term]**. When I got to McGill there was another clinical psychologist there named Ernest Poser and of course there was Ed Webster with the industrial psychology group and Ernest and I made up our minds that the time had come to push for a PhD programme in clinical. And so a huge part of my effort went into legitimizing within the McGill setting a PhD programme in clinical. Does that answer your question?

**JB** – I believe it does. I'm curious what was the reception of that change-over, the inclusion of a PhD programme in clinical?

**VD** – It was a fight. There was even talk at that time as you'll see if you read this book I'm giving you on the *Future of Canadian Psychology* – there was even some feeling that clinical psychologists should be trained in medical schools and there certainly was some doubt about whether they should be an integral part of the psychology departments.

**JB** – Ok.

**VD** – I remember Don Hebb – who later became one of my best friends and supporters saying to me, "Ginny, I don't want to see you training second-class psychiatrists." **[I told him, "No, I am interested in training first class psychologists."]**

**JB** – Ah! Ok.

**VD** – And, right from the beginning - it helped that I gave a talk on my own research and he could see – it wasn't his kind of research – but he could see that I knew what research was about *[Laughing]*. And he was very interested in it, and he gradually realized that at least some of the people going into applied clinical should have a solid research backing and he was willing to see McGill train some of those people. So once he decided he thoroughly supported us.

**JB** – Oh interesting.

{00:12:40}

**JB** – Now I'll come back to follow up on McGill itself but I had one other question about clinical psychology training programmes. I noticed from your CV that in the 1970s you were involved in a few international delegations, one to Cuba, one to China, but I couldn't find very much about those, so I was wondering if you could tell me what the purpose of the trips was.

**VD** – You have to move from my interest in promoting a scientist-practitioner model of clinical psychology to my broader interest in promoting science **[and applied science]** in

Canada. And, by the time I went to China I was president of an organization called SCITEC, Science-Technology. And there again was the idea of a cross-Canada organization in which scientists, pure and applied, would work together and promote these fields because government was giving so little money to psychology **[and other sciences]**. That's one of the reasons I was included in the Canadian delegation to China. We had a **[government ministry]** of Science and Technology by the time we went to China. And the minister and deputy minister **[headed the delegation]**. They were interested in how they were setting up science in China, trying to help them somewhat and it was very interesting *[Laughing]* because the Chinese of course did not think they were going to get a psychologist out of this deal they were thinking physics, chemistry, engineering. But I was president of SCITEC and they had no choice *[Both laughing]*. So they even got me my own interpreter and I went around to some of the Chinese mental hospitals with my own interpreter. But that was just part of this science-technology push, not just for psychology, but for all of the science and engineering groups in Canada. Each of them had their own associations. Each of them had a pittance – except the engineers had a lot of money – but most of the rest were trying to run a head office on very little money and by getting SCITEC together our big dream at that time was to have one main office and have all of the associations represented at that office so they could share all the expenses and know what each other was doing and also speak to government on behalf of science-technology. **[We hoped to call it “HOST” – House of Science and Technology]**.

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**JB** – Following up on that: Cuba was a similar type of aim?

**VD** – No Cuba was different. I went to Cuba as part of a sabbatical and I taught there. I don't speak Spanish but it was amazing what a wonderful time I had there trying to bring them up-to-date on psychology's development in Canada and the United States. And I collected all sorts of books and articles, and for awhile I was shipping stuff off Cuba. I gave lectures there with an interpreter and travelled around the country quite a bit. It was a wonderful experience. And of course Communism was coming into its own at that time and so I was interested in how a communist country was organized.

**JB** – Right, how interesting.

**VD** – Yes.

**JB** – I'd like to turn a little bit towards a similar topic but a little more focused on your service work. You served as President of the Canadian Psychological Association in 1971, can you - just as an initial question – describe the atmosphere surrounding a young, female psychologist at the time and what the organization was like?

**VD** – Once I got my footing at McGill and, on the whole, had really wonderful support from my colleagues - male colleagues and Muriel Stern was there, she was a good friend – and Mary Wright had already been president of CPA. And frankly, because I know one of your agendas is coming up here, and so I have to sort of make clear that being a woman at that

time had not held me up and, as a matter of fact, they were willing to dump [*Laughing*] a lot of work on a woman as I showed you, that huge report on the future of Canadian psychology. That was a huge amount of work. And they were happy to have a woman coordinate it. The one thing that I remember **[that really fits the stereotype]**: one man really did what was a stupid thing, and an annoying thing, but also a funny thing because I knew him, I knew his style. Metric measurement had just come in and he was the past president and he introduced me as the new president [*Laughs*] and in his extolling of my virtues, he told them what my metric measurements were. I mean a real male, the kind of thing that really disturbs most women. And it was - it was dumb. But really, he wasn't being mean at all; he thought he was being funny. Yeah. But that's the only place, in all the time I was president that being a woman seemed to make any difference.

**JB** – Well that's wonderful to hear! I do have a...I did obviously lead to something because we've spoken in an earlier interview with Sandra Pyke and so we've sort of heard about your role, through her, about the year following your presidency and so I very much wanted to follow up and hear your perspective.

**VD** – Yes!

**JB** – And so, the year preceding your term as CPA president there was a symposium for which you were supposed to serve as a discussant and it was rejected that year (by the program committee) from the conference at CPA. And we're told that it led a group of graduate students and other young psychologists, to hold what has become known as the "Underground Symposium."

**VD** – That's right.

**JB** – And so I've been very curious to know [*VD laughing*] all I've heard was that you were to serve as the discussant on the original panel and I don't know what your involvement was – if there was any involvement – in the later Underground Symposium.

**VD** – Well, frankly I can't remember what they asked me – but if they asked me to be a discussant, I'm sure I said yes. The next year they decided to hold this separate symposium. I frankly didn't think it was necessary **[because if Sandra had asked me, as President, I would have looked into how their interests could have been met.]** – I didn't know about it until it was all arranged. But if that's what they wanted to do, I thought it was fine. And I did go to the symposium. We, as Sandra says, walked through a tunnel [*Laughing*] and there were a bunch of women wanting to discuss a sort of a feminist view of psychology and what was happening. The truth of the matter is that I've listened to Sandra's interview and she's a good friend we still – we've been corresponding – but I just can't empathize truly with the amount of excitement she feels about it. It was an interesting sort of thing to do and they did it and I watched and listened, but I wasn't shaken or excited or – in the same way that Sandra was.

{00:24:55}

**JB** – Do you think – now this is the year after you had just served as president of the Canadian Psychological Association [**VD: I think it was the year that I was President that they held the Symposium?**] so I mean you were very well established in your field. Do you think that played a role at all and that some of the other participants [**VD** – Oh sure!] were more junior?

**VD** – I think that there were women who hadn't had the luck that I had. One of the sources of the luck, of course, was falling into one of the best departments in Canada [**because my husband's appointment brought me to McGill**]. When you're dealing with intelligent people, if you work hard enough to give an intelligent argument, you usually get listened to. But there were all sorts of weak and strong departments across Canada and maybe some of the women had indeed experienced a rough time and hadn't been able to push through it. And, you know, salaries were different. There were a lot of things to be mad about, but I guess I was so into my own research and the other part of me was so into pushing psychology and science-technology in Canada – and nothing about being a woman was stopping me – so I just kept going and tried, whenever possible, to support women who were trying to make it. While, I have to admit, realizing that the job of being a woman and a scientist or a practitioner - if you're going to have children – is mighty tough. And some of the women I worked with – although we packed a lot of training into them, they weren't able in their later lives to have an intensive career using the science training. Others, like the ones that are interviewed in the [**Ottawa Citizen**] article I told you about, went on to have wonderful careers. But some of them didn't have children. I guess I'm very aware of this right now because the lady who helps keep my apartment clean works in a children's nursery and she is in tears sometimes talking about how the children are dumped even earlier than the place opens - and it opens early - and the parents are often late in picking them up, and the children are exhausted and her heart goes out to those children. And so I've been very much aware of the conflict and I must admit that probably my most productive time was after I was divorced and my son had reached an age where he had a busy life of his own.

**JB** – Well this was actually a question that I was going to ask you towards the end but maybe I'll pick up on it right now: you did have a young family when you arrived at McGill and yet were extremely productive at that point as well so I was wondering about the balance, sort of how you managed that personal and professional life?

**VD** – Well one of the secrets is having one child. [*Both laugh*] If you have more than one I think it starts compounding. The other secret is to get the very best help you can get. Like when Donnie was a little boy, we had a woman living across the street who was like his grandmother. She baked cookies for him and she, I mean she really played the role. But there again, and I've been reminded of this lately, this means that other women have to be prepared to help you reach your goals by keeping your home going and helping look after your children.

**JB** – So very much a community support kind of system?

**VD** – Yes. And of course there's much more support now. But, I think there are compromises that are taking place.

**JB** – I'd like to ask you a little bit about McGill itself. You spent your entire career at McGill in the Psychology Department and I was wondering if you could think back to the beginning part of that, when you first arrived, and what some of your earliest impressions of the department was?

{00:31:07}

**VD** – Well at that time, as I said earlier, Don Hebb made it clear that he didn't want to train second-rate psychiatrists. My colleague Ernest Poser was really strongly against any psychoanalytic aspects [*Laughs*] of clinical psychology and, of course, I'd come from Michigan [*Laughs*] which had a really good psychoanalytic clinic where I was trained. So, there were frictions and they just had to be gradually worked out and I remember one of the things that I did was sponsor bringing in speakers who represented the scientist-practitioner model and made sure that they spent time talking about the science behind their work. And Don Hebb came to these symposia and the other staff came and some of them got very interested in some of these topics. And by that time I had really good friends in the department and it just gradually – I'm not saying we merged – but there was definitely, I think, a mutual respect and a live and let live atmosphere. Once they saw that we were capable of bringing in first-rate students - and of course this is one of the threats to the basic part of psychology: you need more applied psychologists and there are more people interested in being trained, so you could get outnumbered if you were a basic researcher. So all these things were just worked through and fortunately we worked them through in an intelligent, supportive atmosphere.

**JB** – Now, you've emphasized a few times that there was very much a supportive atmosphere at McGill, but I do have to ask you – in our email exchange prior to meeting [*Both laugh*] and I'm sorry if I'm picking up on a very small little thing here, I'm just curious. [*VD* – No, no, that really was a very funny thing] So you told me you engaged in the odd battle on behalf of women in academia and you told me about the challenge to get access to the main dining room in the McGill Faculty Club [*VD Laughing*] and I'm just curious to hear a little more about it.

**VD** – Well, Muriel Stern and I staged a sit in.

**JB** – Oh?

**VD** – [*Laughs*] Oh yes. This was the sort of stuff women's lib loves. [*Both laugh*] We were right in there! They had two dining rooms. There was a men's dining and there was a ladies' dining room. Remember when all of this happened, Faculty Club was a men's club and most of the women who came to have lunch were their wives. There weren't that many women faculty around. So gradually, of course, they hired women faculty and some of us resented very much the fact that we couldn't eat in the main dining room. I mean I could invite an outside guest, but I couldn't take him into the main dining room, I had to take him



into the ladies' dining room [*Laughing*] and then my male colleagues had to go in there to join us. And it was pretty stupid. But, you could see that when they had billiards – Hebb played billiards – I mean, there was a wonderful atmosphere for men [*JB laughs*] they loved it. They had a reading room and it was really great. It was in an old embassy, it's a beautiful building. So, they had to, each year, let the women go into the main dining room – the men's dining room – for the summer because they couldn't afford to keep [*Laughs*] two dining rooms going. So one year Muriel and I and all our male friends – and by that time, men, for example, from the Russian department and the Biology department were supporting us - so we just decided, when the time came to go back to the women's dining room, not to go. So we continued to go to this table with people from psychology and our friends. We were having a great old time – the talk was good – and we really thought that they would just accept it. But by golly, they didn't! And so they decided to have a vote and we won, but we only won 2-to-1. One third of the men voted against. And one of the cutest things was – there was a dear old professor, and after the vote Muriel and I were sitting there, he came up to me and put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Dr. Douglas, it is so good to see you here. Now mind you, I voted against having [*Laughing*] women in this dining room, but, my dear, I didn't mean you." [*Both laughing*] So those were the crazy times when things were breaking loose and people were having to adapt to them.

**JB** – Well thank you, I appreciate you sharing that. [*Both laughing*] I wanted to follow on a little bit later in your time at McGill, you served as the first female Chair of the department. And I was wondering if there was anything that stood out in your mind about that time or if you could share what you felt was your biggest accomplishment during that time?

**VD** – Yes. Out of sheer luck, my accomplishments were great. I think anybody going back over the history could see what happened. We were in the Faculty of Science – Arts and Science had got divided – we were in the Faculty of Science and, really and truly, even the Dean who acted like he was thoroughly sympathetic to us never ever got us our share of money or space. And Dalbir Bindra had been Chair of the Department and I watched him, his heart almost broke from fighting and fighting. And I remember the Associate Dean was – I would think he was almost hostile – he somehow convinced the Dean that we gave grades away. You know, that we graded higher? Anyway, out of sheer luck McGill decided right at that time to have Five Year Plans. Each department had to write a major document talking about their strengths and their weaknesses. The men in the department really pulled together with me and we got all the documentation that really proved our point. After all, among other things, we were bringing in all these undergraduates and they were getting those fees and surely some of that [*Laughing*] could come back to us. And so we wrote a really strong statement making it clear that we felt we hadn't had our fair share. One of the things we did was, I asked a good statistician in the department to go over the statistics of the grades in the Science Faculty so I had a section in the report, "Slightly Meaner than the Mean," which meant that our grades [*Both laughing*] were slightly lower than those in the so-called hard sciences. The other stroke of luck was that there was a highly intelligent Vice-Principal, Samuel Freedman. We had written down exactly what we needed and he called me over and he said, "Ginny, I can get you that within a couple of months. And that will take some time but we'll figure it out...forget it, [*Laughing*] don't push it too far" [*Laughing*]. And by Glory, he just set to and he just changed things and we

gradually got more money, more space, more influence in the university, and that was a real break point I think. And it just happened that that Five Year Plan - which I just hated the whole idea of - *[Laughing]* but once I caught on that it might help us that's what we did.

{00:42:33}

**JB** - Before we leave the topic of McGill, it's not a question that I had originally written down but it dawns on me to ask now. You've mentioned people like Donald Hebb, Muriel Stern, and others in the Department. I was wondering if you have any thoughts that stand out about working with any of them.

**VD** - Well it was at that time a very friendly department. And we always had coffee together **[everyday]** - no more - these things have gone. We all knew what each other was doing and an awful lot of us worked on the weekends. And we would come in and Laura Pettito, who I had hired while I was Chair would send me an email: "Ginny I got cheese..." you know? *[Laughs]* And we'd get together, and eat together - have lunch together - so there was a very dedicated, but fun-type atmosphere.

**JB** - A camaraderie?

**VD** - A camaraderie.

**JB** - Oh that's wonderful.

**VD** - Yeah, there really was. Now I must admit that later a couple of women in the department - and this is part of this feminism thing that worries me - the really smart ones are fabulous, who are also primadonnas and can cause more trouble than *[Laughing]* any of the men I ever met in the Department. They had worked so hard to assert themselves, I think, that they began to ask for far more than their share. And sometimes this would come up, you know when you had to go through people's salaries and give some people more of a bigger merit increase? Things like that sometimes caused trouble.

**JB** - Is there any particular event that might stand out in your memory?

**VD** - Well I don't want to talk about them - there were a couple of really sad events - but I don't want to talk about them because they turned out to be so sad.

{00:45:12}

**JB** - Oh ok, I understand. I would like to turn to your research now. Your work in particular with Attention Deficit Disorder in children has been extremely influential and I was wondering how you became interested in the subject?

**VD** - When I came to McGill, because we were Clinical, we each had an appointment in a hospital. And I was lucky enough to go to the Montreal Children's Hospital where Sam Rabinovitch, a very wonderful Child Clinical Psychologist was Head. But during the first few

years I was there, I got to know the psychiatrists and I worked up on the psychiatric ward, 7-D. Gaby Weiss and John Werry, two psychiatrists, had begun studying what was then called 'hyperactivity' and as Gaby says in the *Ottawa Citizen* article, where she was interviewed, they needed my kind of research expertise and so they invited me to share in that research. They started off on the simplest one, I think. We went back to the birth records of a group of hyperactives and a matched group of normal children, trying to see if there was anything in the actual birth delivery record that would differentiate them. And there wasn't. The records were lousy [*Laughing*] and you couldn't get much out of them. But then we did a lot of other things together, and of course, once we got into the drugs, it was essential that I work with medical people. And since we had this lovely team going we each did our own thing, but we each helped each other. We published several papers together and then my students and I sort of took off on the cognitive disabilities, the effects of medication (Ritalin), the children's abnormal response to reinforcement, and the other aspects I studied.

{00:48:19}

**JB** – So your involvement with the Children's Hospital then, was very early on?

**VD** – Very early

**JB** – So the two, McGill and the Children's were sort of in tandem then?

**VD** – That's right.

**JB** – Ok. And so, uh when I see on your CV that you served as Senior Psychologist there it was very much as part of your role on faculty at McGill then?

**VD** – Yes. Absolutely.

**JB** – Ok. Now it's hard looking at your CV to pull out one or two articles [*Laughing*] but I do have to ask about, "Stop, Look, and Listen" which became a Citation Classic. And I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about its impact.

**VD** – Yes. You might want to read what Russell Barkley says about its impact, [**in the *Ottawa Citizen* article**], because we are unsure of what our own work contributes. But it had a substantial impact. I had brought together a really good bunch of students by that time: Nancy Cohen, Susan Campbell - well I'm mentioning the women more because of your interests - Don Sykes. We had really begun to measure - as specifically as we could - the cognitive difficulties of these children. Everybody knew they were hyperactive and rambunctious, but I wanted to know what was going on cognitively and, ultimately, was there some connection with abnormalities in the brain that might account for it. So at that time, when I gave that talk, we had all the studies I think by those three people done, and we had done a pretty good job of laying out some of the cognitive deficits using laboratory-based tasks as well as tasks from the schoolroom - scholastic ability. We had also tried to test them on and off medication in double-blind studies where, hopefully, the person

testing the kid didn't know whether he – and I say “he” because most of them were boys then – was on placebo or medication. So I was able to show, and again it was really dramatic, the results from the medication were so strong and so clear that, I almost wondered if something was going wrong in the lab, if our blindness had been betrayed or whatever. But I had different lab people in there and over and over we found a really profound effect on the performance of the kids and went on to measure more and more things after that – hundreds of measures. And then again after that we got more into dosage effects and you could just see the improvement on such diverse measures, just climbing and climbing. And one of the big things that we really got into was that some people had suggested that too high a dose would be damaging and I expected it too but I was quite amazed *at first* that we could go up to good **[high]** clinical doses and not show that effect. One of the things that I regret from that line of research is that the paper that really showed the effect I was looking for was - I let my students publish where they chose for their theses and Tamara Berman did not chose a child clinical journal and that paper got lost. But what it showed was that you could show the effect. We designed a highly complex test with different levels of difficulty and on the lower difficulty tasks you could go up to high doses - we never went beyond clinical recommendations. But on the complex tasks you suddenly started to see what I had seen working with these kids clinically. They started to work so hard to be sure that they had the right answer that their reaction time went up phenomenally. So I was able to show a phenomenon that really tied in with my guess about what's wrong with them – they were putting forth too much effort. So the effect of the drugs was to make them concentrate, put forth the effort, work hard, and this is why I'm involved right now, in my own work, concentrating our university students using these drugs. If they have an exam the next day or if they have a term paper it can really help them do better but I'm not at all convinced that it will help them very much beyond that **[and there are many reasons why using the drugs this way is highly questionable]**.

**JB** – In the long term you mean?

**VD** – Yes, in the long term.

**JB** – Right, ok.

**VD** – And unless you intend to spend the rest of your life on the drugs, as soon as you take the drug away, the effect gets lost and, even with the ADHD kids, there's been a terrible problem in showing long term effects. So I just hate to see it – and a lot of our university students at McGill, at Queen's – they are using them. They get them from their pals or they talk their doctor into thinking they're ADHD and it's a very phony way to get good grades. And, frankly, in the modern university all you usually have to do is get good grades on a multiple choice test *[Laughing]* and whether you have thought through what is really going on in a question, doesn't get tested that well by multiple choice.

{00:57:30}

**JB** – I did have one follow-up question to your comments about your research. How did you find that the DSM-III, I believe it's the DSM-III, where Attention Deficit first became listed, did that have an impact on your work at all?

**VD** – [*Laughing*] That's also covered in the [*Ottawa Citizen*] article. You know they've changed the name of the disorder several times. Russ Barkley says that my work did have an impact in that it helped bring the attentional deficit and the impulsivity or inhibition deficit into the label and definition of the disorder. In the early days they were concentrating on the hyperactivity and so in that way it did. I was invited once, to join one of those panels - one of the multiple times that they changed the thing but I truly didn't want to. I just didn't think that that's where [**I could make my contributions**] in relabeling and relabeling. I know we need an instrument to help people diagnose the disorder and we should make it as good as we can. But I decided to let people who were more interested in that end of it do it. I was spending so much of my time on this SCITEC and the science [**wars. Science**] in Canada is getting terribly abused right now by the government and much as you hate to say it, the money to do research has got to come from somewhere. So, trying to get an intelligent approach to the support of science-technology [**is difficult**]. So the role of women, for me, has to fit in with this bigger picture because it's both men and women that either get the chance or don't get the chance. Do you ask me too about supporting women? Again, in the [*Ottawa Citizen*] article [**some of my students who were interested talked about that.**] They and I have very fond memories of having my students up to my cottage in the Laurentians [**enjoying**] weekends together. There was a really good feeling.

**JB** – Well this is actually one of the things I was curious about is sort of that mentorship role.

**VD** – Yes.

**JB** – You've already just begun talking about it but how did you approach that role with your students? How did you see yourself as a mentor?

{01:02:47}

**VD** – You know, they asked me one time to talk about mentoring and I told them I didn't even know that mentoring was a verb. [*Laughing*] We didn't think in those terms. We had a person who was hopefully committed to learning and we put our whole selves into supporting them. I mean I've had students working in my apartment half-way through the night when they were trying to meet a deadline. One of them in tears because she said, "I haven't got a thesis because [**the ADHD children have gone for**] 350 trials and they never learned it." And I said, "Didn't you [**predict**] that they were going to have trouble under this condition?" It had to do with reinforcement and learning it. She said, "Yes." And I said, "Well couldn't you just [**use**] 350 as your number?" [**(A very conservative number indeed!)**] "OH!" [*Laughing*] So you're constantly helping and supporting and I've had a lot of fun with my students. One of them told me that it was one of the happiest times in her life [**at the cottage**]. We snowshoed and we cooked and it was really great.

**JB** – So it sounds like you had a wonderful relationship with your students.

**VD** – Yeah, I did **[with most of them]**. And I think again, just to be honest, how much you can give to your students in that very personal way depends on what’s happening in your own life. And if I had had three children, I doubt that I would have been able to do that, at least to the same extent. But it really was a lovely time and we had – as my son said, “My mother always loved her work.” And, that’s the sort of atmosphere that really made me happy.

**JB** – I’m curious, you may not have thought of mentoring as a verb *[Both laughing]* until you were asked about it, but sort of looking back on your own training, was there anybody at Michigan, or at Queen’s, or even once you arrived at McGill who stood out in that role, serving as a mentor to you?

**VD** – The first place I think you have to go back to is high school.

**JB** – Oh, ok, ok.

**VD** – And at **[the Smiths Falls Collegiate Institute]** there was one lady named Mary McCallum and she was outstanding as a **[high school]** teacher. She actually got an honorary degree from Queen’s for her history of teaching. So she was definitely the main person who made me realize that I could go on to university. At McGill, believe it or not, Don Hebb was my chief mentor. And his genuineness was **[amazing.]** When we went to APA and all of my professors from Michigan were sort of trying to get to talk to the most important other professors, Don would say: “Hey Ginny, where are you going? We’re going to get together. Will you come?” He really loved his students and loved being with them, and he included young staff in this. So I felt the first time I ever went to an APA meeting from McGill, I really felt like a McGill person and that was partly from his support. And also I would say, “Don, I just got back this review and they’re criticizing this” and he’d say, “Ginny, come on, I’ve got a whole file-drawer full of my rejections. I think you should sit and read them.” So he really taught you what was important and what wasn’t important.

**JB** – Was he like that for many of the junior faculty members or did you just get along really well?

**VD** – Perhaps because we fought so hard at first **[- but he truly supported young staff.]**

**JB** – Oh ok.

**VD** – I think he was supportive of a lot of people, I think most of the people really liked Hebb. Now, remember, at the time I came he was no longer Chairman. Ed Webster was actually Chairman of the whole department –

**JB** – But Dr. Hebb maintained a fair amount of – authority? *[Laughing]*

**VD** – He was McGill [**psychology**].

**JB** – There’s just a couple of last, overall questions – I’m cognizant of our time and I don’t want to take up too much of –

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**VD** – Well [**because of a cold**], I haven’t had a voice through all of this so [*Laughing*] don’t worry about me losing my voice!

**JB** – [*Laughing*] Well, thank you! [*Both laughing*] I’m wondering overall, just reflecting back on your career, what accomplishments really stand out to you? Is there one that you’re particularly proud of?

**VD** – Oh I think it’s got to be the scientific contribution to the understanding of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, whatever they decide to call it next. And particularly the cognitive deficits, the effect of medication, medication dosage, and the [**children’s unusual**] responses to reinforcement - their need for continuous reinforcement as opposed to partial. Their great upset when reinforcers are withdrawn and this of course gets you into the dopamine hypothesis and a lot of people now are really trying to study the brain mechanisms of ADHD but we did contribute, I guess, in drawing attention to those factors. It was their behaviour everybody was interested in because they really were a nuisance in a classroom and to their parents, so I came in from a different angle and I think it was really important that that be done. And to know as [**accurately**] as we can, what the drugs do and don’t do for them.

**JB** – There’s been a lot of talk over the years of concern that children are over-medicated.

**VD** – Yes.

**JB** – Do you have any thoughts on that?

**VD** – Yes. I think it’s the old story: some children who could benefit, don’t get them. But a lot of children who are not my definition of ADHD are given them. Often in an attempt to keep some sort of control in the family and in the schoolroom, and you can look at the figures, the use of these drugs – and of course the newer drugs are coming in – it’s going up and up. And of course now adults are using them a lot. Now there’s a difference between ADHD adults using them and people who want to pass a test using them. They do help some adults.

**JB** – Your work though, has focused primarily with children, correct?

**VD** – Yes. I didn’t work with adults.

**JB** – One other question – again, on this overall theme – do you have any advice, having seen your students come through psychology, to young Canadian psychologists just

entering graduate school or just beginning on their career about what you've learned along the way?

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**VD** – Well, I guess chose your supervisor [**carefully**]. Make sure that your supervisor is working in a field that you genuinely can be interested in. And, for me the joy of research was great, for others the joy of doing psychotherapy is what drives them. And try to find people who can [**enhance**] the strengths that you just naturally seem to be fitted for. Use your talents [*Both laughing*] way back in the Bible, wasn't it? Each man got a certain number of talents and the main thing was to use what you have.

**JB** – Ok, so play to your strengths.

**VD** – Yes.

**JB** – [*Laughing*] That's good advice, thank you. The very last thing I wanted to ask you about was: You've had a long and fulfilling career, what stands out to you as perhaps the most dramatic changes that have happened in psychology from the time you were a student to your retirement?

**VD** - I still go in to the psych department once or twice a week. I'm an Emeritus Professor and they've left me a little office and some secretarial help. [**McGill has become so big**] there is so much emphasis on money. You hire a Principal or a President now partly for fundraising and that I think has a profound effect on the whole collegial atmosphere. Instead of being able to sit and talk [**about interesting problems**], so much is tied up in getting ready to write multiple choice tests. They do give presentations but I don't feel the same involvement. The professors are under really heavy stress. Just raising enough money to do your research now - it's almost a gamble. You know: what's in style with the government, what's in this year, and of course, when budgets are cut, [**the researchers and applied scientists**] get cut too. The universities are taking a beating right now, certainly McGill is. They've pushed people towards early retirement and things of this sort, and that always changes the atmosphere.

**JB** – But you see some of those pressures as even stronger than earlier on when psychology was still struggling to gain that recognition?

**VD** – They're different. We had hope that we could get what we needed. Now - there was actually more – and it's being taken away. And it's being taken away in an irrational way. Who the government happens to appoint to make these decisions is often not a scientist, but a politician.

**JB** – Ok, so it's very different from –

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**VD** – Yes, but the politicians were just as bad back then. I remember when I went around and visited each of the **[political]** parties, trying to get support for SCITEC and building this ‘HOST’ **[House of Science Technology]** as we called it. One of the politicians said to me, “Have you talked to any of the other political parties?” And I said, “Oh yes, I’m going to them all.” And he said, “That’s not the way to do it. If you want somebody to be your spearhead choose one party so they can make it their cause.” And I thought, “Who am I talking to and where did my science go?” The game of politics is playing a very big role. And so finding, hoping, that a party will come along where they at least realize that science counts and **[some of the people making judgments about funding science]** should have scientific training. Also they should listen to their own **[government]** scientists. They’re stopping them from speaking out right now. I mean this is a particularly tough time for scientists. So I think the times are tough in a very different way.

**JB** – Ok. I’ve tried to cover a couple of different themes but the very last thing that I wanted to ask you was: is there anything that I didn’t ask either about your career, or psychology’s development that stand out in your memory that you’d like to share?

**VD** – No, I guess that since you’re coming **[at this interview]** as a feminist historian, we’ve talked more about administration and stuff whereas my true love is in the science **[and applied science]**. But that’s to be understood. But no, I think you’ve covered a great deal.

**JB** – Well, thank you for your time –

**VD** – Your questions were very interesting.

**JB** – Oh thank you. Well here, we’ll turn this off and let you off the “hot seat.”

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--END OF INTERVIEW--