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Linda L. Viney, 1942-2014

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Abstract

Highly educated, intelligent, and cultured-but also ambitious and hardworking-LindaViney had a remarkable five-decade career in psychology. Her career was formed from her highly developed intellectual talent for absorbing and creating knowledge and her ambitious, diligent, and industrious approach to research. Friends describe not only her intellect and creative ideas but her warmth and sense of humor. Linda had the unique quality of being able to connect with people outside academia in a way that made them feel special and unique. She was ambitious academically, but personally humble, generous, and kind.

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Highly educated, intelligent, and cultured—but also ambitious and hardworking—Linda Viney had a remarkable five decade career in psychology. Her career was formed from her highly developed intellectual talent for absorbing and creating knowledge and her ambitious, diligent, and industrious approach to research. Friends describe not only her intellect and creative ideas, but her warmth and sense of humor. Linda had the unique quality of being able to connect with people outside academia in a way that made them feel special and unique. She was ambitious academically, but personally humble, generous, and most kind.

Linda Louise Viney was born in Launceston, Tasmania, Australia, at the cusp of Australia's involvement in the Pacific theatre of World War II. She was the only child of Joyce Barnard and Keith Viney, a wool classer. Linda's paternal great, great grandparents arrived in Launceston from Somerset, United Kingdom in 1842 by assisted passage on a ship named Arab. With strong support from her mother, Linda's high intellectual curiosity and capacity led to early achievement of a Tasmanian State Bursary (1953-1957). At the age of 15, she matriculated as the top student of the State of Tasmania. Linda won scholarships for her undergraduate, honors, and masters of arts in psychology studies—as well as for her doctoral work at the University of Cincinnati in the United States. In addition to earning her

Ph.D. from Cincinnati in 1969, Linda also achieved a certificate in community mental health. Returning from the USA, she obtained an academic position at Macquarie University, serving as a lecturer from 1969-1973 and a senior lecturer from 1973-1979. Linda also gained considerable teaching experience at the Australian National University (1963-1966), the University of St Andrews in Scotland (1976), and the University of Waterloo in Canada (1976) before joining the University of Wollongong in 1980 as an associate professor of psychology. She remained at Wollongong until her retirement.

Linda was passionate about research as the vehicle for enriching the knowledge base of psychology and for the dissemination of psychology's relevance to the everyday lives of people. As an author, Linda was prodigious, publishing in the areas of measurement and assessment in clinical, counseling, and health psychology. She also published work on lifespan development and the psychology of health and illness. These research interests attracted over a million dollars in research grants as she followed her passion to apply psychology to the concerns of health care consumers such as HIV/AIDS patients and caregivers, victims of sexual assault, the chronically ill, the elderly, women with breast cancer, women with menopausal problems, and the unemployed. Her work related to HIV/AIDS was recognized in 1993 and she was made a research fellow in the department of psychiatry at University of Queensland by the National Centre for Social HIV Research. Linda and her research associates were also awarded the First European Personal Construct Psychology Doctoral Student Prize (2002), the Mental Health Matters Certificate (2003), and the Australian and New Zealand Mental Health Service and Program Gold Medal Award (2004).

Many of Linda's publications are in clinical and counseling psychology, where her primary interest was the development and evaluation of more effective and practical techniques in personal construct theory. Embedded in her research was the desire to empower

people to evaluate research and its psychological usefulness to them and their needs. Funded by research grants, Linda's studies were often challenging, addressing issues of importance to marginalized patient groups many years before these issues gained widespread attention.

Throughout her life, Linda championed the relevance and rigor of the profession of psychology. As a teacher molding students into psychologists, Linda taught and actively promoted the ethical and professional code of conduct of psychology. She was a member and chair of the Psychological Registration Board in New South Wales from 1989-1999. As a foundation member and fellow of the Australian Psychological Society (APS), Linda served on many Society committees, including those concerned with health care, ethics, course accreditation, and the development of the Division of Clinical Psychology. Linda was also a member of the American Psychological Association.

As an academic administrator, Linda passionately cared about and lobbied for learning environments that promoted a reflexive approach to best professional practice. Following her appointment in 1980 as head of the University of Wollongong's psychology department, Linda effectively lobbied to get postgraduate courses in general psychology, applied psychology, and clinical psychology added to the curriculum. This led to the school of psychology becoming part of the faculty of social science. For 15 years, Linda held the position of professor, directing the clinical postgraduate program. She was eventually appointed a professorial research fellow. At both Macquarie and Wollongong universities, Linda played an active part in the administration of the psychological faculties. At the University of Wollongong, Linda occupied the founding chair of the management committee and was director of graduate programs in clinical psychology. Her passion for excellence in academic education led Linda to serve on over 14 committees concerned with promoting and ensuring academic integrity and standards. Linda's commitment to academic excellence was also demonstrated in her active participation as a member, and later as chair, of the faculty

research committees. This culminated in a 1996-1998 appointment to the preeminent research funding body in Australia, the National Health and Medical Research Council-Human Ethics Committee.

Linda's commitment to academic rigor was evidenced by her active engagement with psychological journals. Between 1970 and 1989, Linda served as reviewer, consulting editor, and editor of the *Australian Psychologist*, the official journal of the APS. She was special editor in 1999 for the *Community Mental Health Journal* of the American Association of Community Psychiatrists. Linda reviewed articles for 11 international psychology journals and regularly reviewed book proposals for Wiley Publishers.

Significantly, Linda's academic knowledge and skills directly addressed personal construct psychology. With her research focus on how people understand their changing social contexts, Linda employed a personal construct model of psychosocial development, researching concepts of transition and crisis in life changes. A primary interest for Linda was to develop and evaluate more effective and practical personal construct theory techniques. Linda was a founding member of the editorial board of the *International Journal of Personal Construct Psychology*, now the *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*. She served as guest editor of an issue (Volume 3, Issue 1) based on the Fourth Australasian Conference on Personal Construct Psychology, which she coordinated. She was instrumental in the establishment of the personal construct research library and the personal construct psychology research group at the University of Wollongong. To ensure all voices were heard, Linda structured this non-hierarchically. Linda organized Australasian conferences on personal construct psychology at the University of Wollongong in 1983, 1989, 1993, and 1995. She chaired the organizing committee of the Tenth International Congress of Personal Construct Psychology in Australia in 1993 and jointly edited a volume of its proceedings. Additionally, Linda provided consultation to the organizing committee of the Fourteenth

International Congress of Personal Construct Psychology at Wollongong in 2002 and was invited to present both a keynote and a plenary address. The key note address was “Applying Personal Construct Models to Work with People in Need.”

As a researcher, Linda set out to apply personal construct ideas to developing techniques of assessment and measurement of people’s meaning-making, giving mental health consumers of mental health a voice. Acting on the personal construct assumption that people actively make sense of their worlds, Linda became passionately involved in developing assessment techniques, such as the quantitative content analysis scales and the qualitative experience cycle methodology. Linda also developed a model of psychological reaction to illness, which served as the basis for the development of a set of therapeutic techniques for the physically ill. These techniques were revised by Linda and her colleagues to provide models of psychological practice for HIV/AIDS and their caregivers, reduce the HIV risk in adolescents, and provide therapy for women with breast cancer. Her research in these areas have extended the principles and assumptions of personal construct psychology in order to assist consumers of mental health services.

For nearly two decades, Linda participated in over 20 governmental committees in commonwealth, state, and local jurisdictions established to provide research opportunities for students of psychology and to develop guidelines to address the ethical and professional integrity of the psychological profession. This community service encompassed participating as a committee member in awarding scholarships and research grants to postgraduate students. It also involved participating as a member or chairing committees vested with developing ethical and professional standards for psychologists.

As a supervisor, Linda guided her students through the rough and unpredictable seas of scholarship, providing an anchor as students alternated between loose and tight construing, contemplated changes, and achieved creative insights. Inspired by Linda’s passionate

commitment to psychology and people, over 30 Ph.D. students and 28 masters/honors students were guided by Linda's supportive and creative hand. In this role, Linda demonstrated academic courage, was comfortable with different perspectives and insights, and inspired students to believe they could achieve. This commitment led to Linda (1991) writing a poem for her clinical psychology students, entitled "On Becoming a Clinical Psychologist."

What does becoming a clinical psychologist mean?

Is it a spiral or an abstract flow of color?

Or is it fishing with the right fly?

Is it a long trip or a silhouette in movement?

Or being able to bridge, to make connections?

Or having light in heart and eye?

A kaleidoscope of images support

A shared confusion felt,

From our calm havens in storms

To our butterfly with black belt.

As a psychotherapist, Linda supported her clients as they began to formulate and express their interpretations of events in their lives. Linda arrived at the University of Wollongong with practical experience as an intern at Cincinnati General Hospital and Daniel Drake Memorial Hospital. Her practical experience also involved both diagnostic and psychotherapeutic skills in both individual and group interventions at the North Ryde Psychiatric Centre and the Counselling Centre at Macquarie University. Linda was instrumental in establishing the Psychological Services Unit (now the Northfields Clinic), later chairing the management committee dedicated to providing psychological services for the community and psychotherapy supervision experiences for clinical graduate students.

Linda's skills were transferred to other psychologists through clinical supervision and continue to be passed on through her published writings on individual supervision and group supervision/peer consultation. Her registration to practice as a psychologist in New South Wales, Australia, remained a proud achievement in her self-construing. While Linda provided an ethical framework for scholarship, she also understood very well an ethical and reflexive approach to our clients. Linda's abstract to her paper titled, "Psychotherapy as a Shared Reconstruction," captures her approach to psychotherapy:

When psychotherapy is viewed as shared reconstruction, there are implications for both clients and therapists. My clients become sources of expectations, myths, thought, and feelings about themselves and their therapists. I, as therapist, become a source of intentions and reflections, with capacities for self-awareness and abilities to construe my clients and their constructs, languages, and metaphors. Both participants in psychotherapy can then be seen as involved in reconstruction through the sharing and rebuilding of narratives. It is the life stories of clients that are likely to be changes in therapy, but my life stories and my stories about the therapeutic process are also open to change. (Viney, 1990, pp. 437)

While courage and perseverance were characteristic of her academic life, they were also present in her personal life. Linda's genetic inheritance meant developmental late onset Huntington's disease, a hereditary neurological degenerative disorder with systemic symptoms. Especially in the last ten years of her life, these symptoms manifested as physical, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive impairments. However, Linda never let Huntington's define her life and she fought against the encroachment of these symptoms into her everyday life through Tai Chi, physiotherapy, and emotional resilience. Knowing the ramifications of this disease having watched her father die from it, Linda only spoke to a handful of trusted friends about her genetic legacy. After marrying Alex Clarke, first professor of psychology

later vice chancellor at University of Wollongong, Linda decided not to risk passing on Huntington's to children. However, she embraced Alex's children from a previous marriage (Jennifer, Margaret, John, and Jill) and actively participated in their lives and their children's lives over the next four decades. As a resilient person, Linda was also a very private person, loyal to family and life-long friends. She was passionate about classical music, poetry, and art. She also shared a love with Alex of Tasmania's Dove Lake reflecting Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff. Alex died peacefully on June 17, 2013, 13 months before Linda's death on July 8, 2014.

Throughout her professional life and in her personal context, Linda was comfortable with new ideas. She set out to create processes by which to articulate new insights as she worked to measure and explain the meaning-making of people in their social contexts.

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References

Viney, L. L. (1990). Psychotherapy as shared reconstruction. *International Journal of Personal Construct Psychology*, 3, 437-456. doi: 10.1080/10720539008412831



Figure 1 Dove Lake, Tasmania. Reprinted with permission.