

UC Berkeley

Berkeley Scientific Journal

Title

Group Interview Question

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7tm3x7mf>

Journal

Berkeley Scientific Journal, 30(1)

ISSN

1097-0967

Author

Editors, BSJ

Publication Date

2026-10-30

DOI

10.5070/BS3.69979

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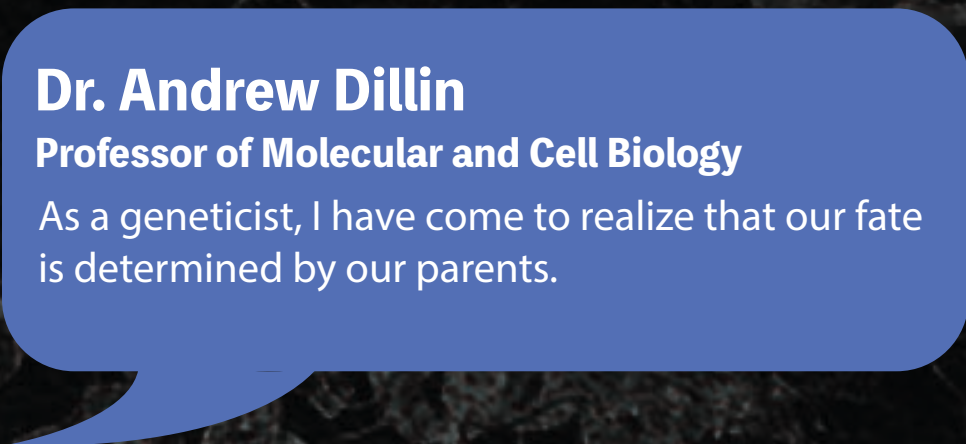
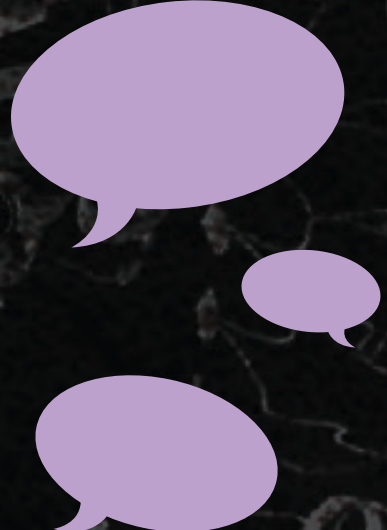
Interviews Department

How has your research translated to your personal life? Have you changed any practices or developed new outlooks or perspectives because of the things you've learned?

Dr. Austin Roorda

Emeritus Professor of Optometry and Vision Science

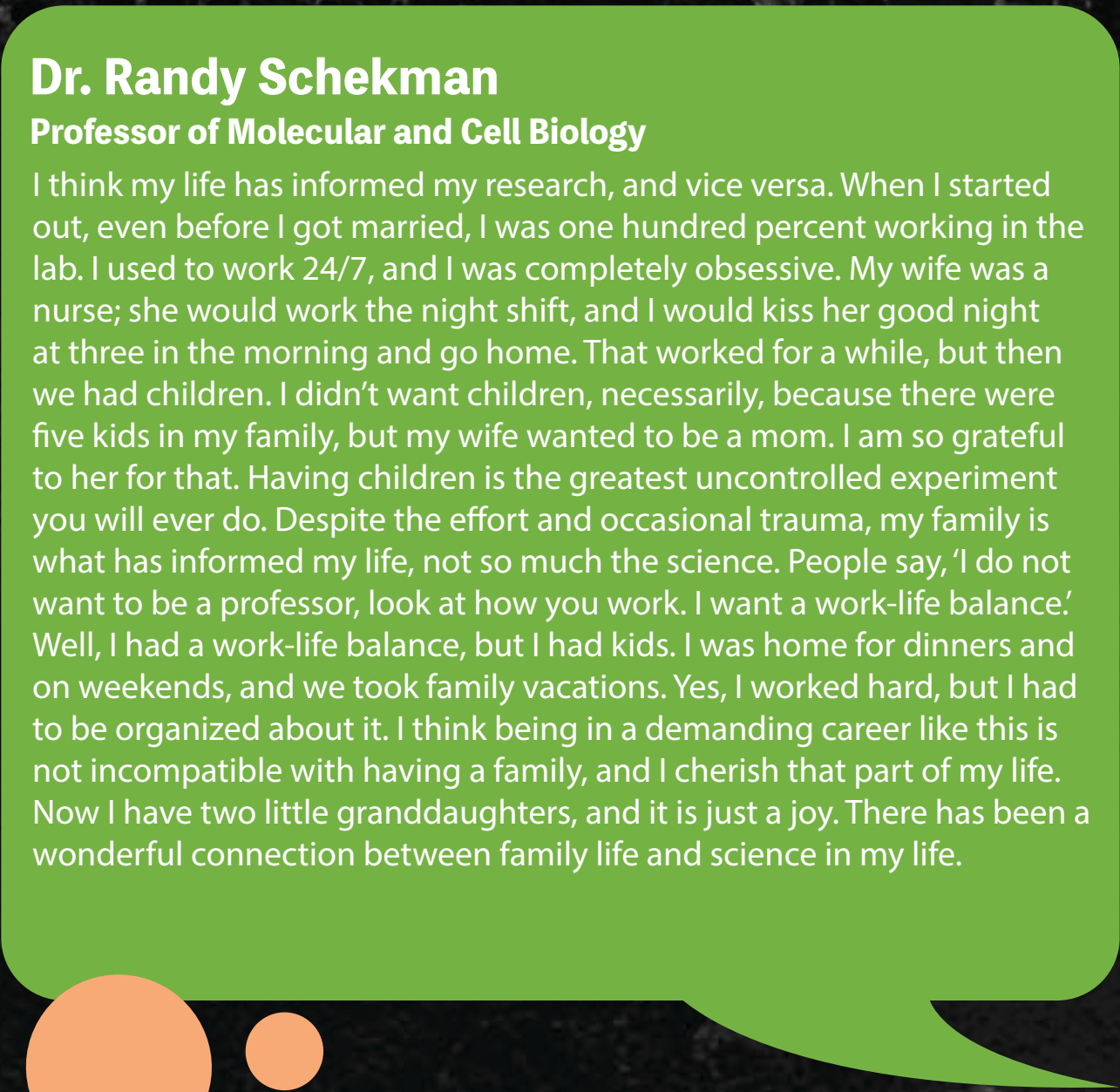
As a scientist, you are always excited about your work. You do not depend on others' enthusiasm to validate it. However, this paper received far more attention than we ever expected, and that was a bit overwhelming at first. For a while, we were fielding calls from reporters and even hearing from people who wanted to experience what we had experienced as subjects of the system, Oz. Most of that has settled down now, but one of the real positives from all that attention is that it has forced me to explain the work to reporters, colleagues, and friends. In doing so, I have refined and even expanded how I think about perception itself. When we first wrote the paper, I could only speak of implication in broad strokes. But after countless conversations, my understanding has become sharper, my perspective broader. Now I am more excited than ever about the possibilities this platform holds.



Dr. Andrew Dillin

Professor of Molecular and Cell Biology

As a geneticist, I have come to realize that our fate is determined by our parents.



Dr. Randy Schekman

Professor of Molecular and Cell Biology

I think my life has informed my research, and vice versa. When I started out, even before I got married, I was one hundred percent working in the lab. I used to work 24/7, and I was completely obsessive. My wife was a nurse; she would work the night shift, and I would kiss her good night at three in the morning and go home. That worked for a while, but then we had children. I didn't want children, necessarily, because there were five kids in my family, but my wife wanted to be a mom. I am so grateful to her for that. Having children is the greatest uncontrolled experiment you will ever do. Despite the effort and occasional trauma, my family is what has informed my life, not so much the science. People say, 'I do not want to be a professor, look at how you work. I want a work-life balance.' Well, I had a work-life balance, but I had kids. I was home for dinners and on weekends, and we took family vacations. Yes, I worked hard, but I had to be organized about it. I think being in a demanding career like this is not incompatible with having a family, and I cherish that part of my life. Now I have two little granddaughters, and it is just a joy. There has been a wonderful connection between family life and science in my life.

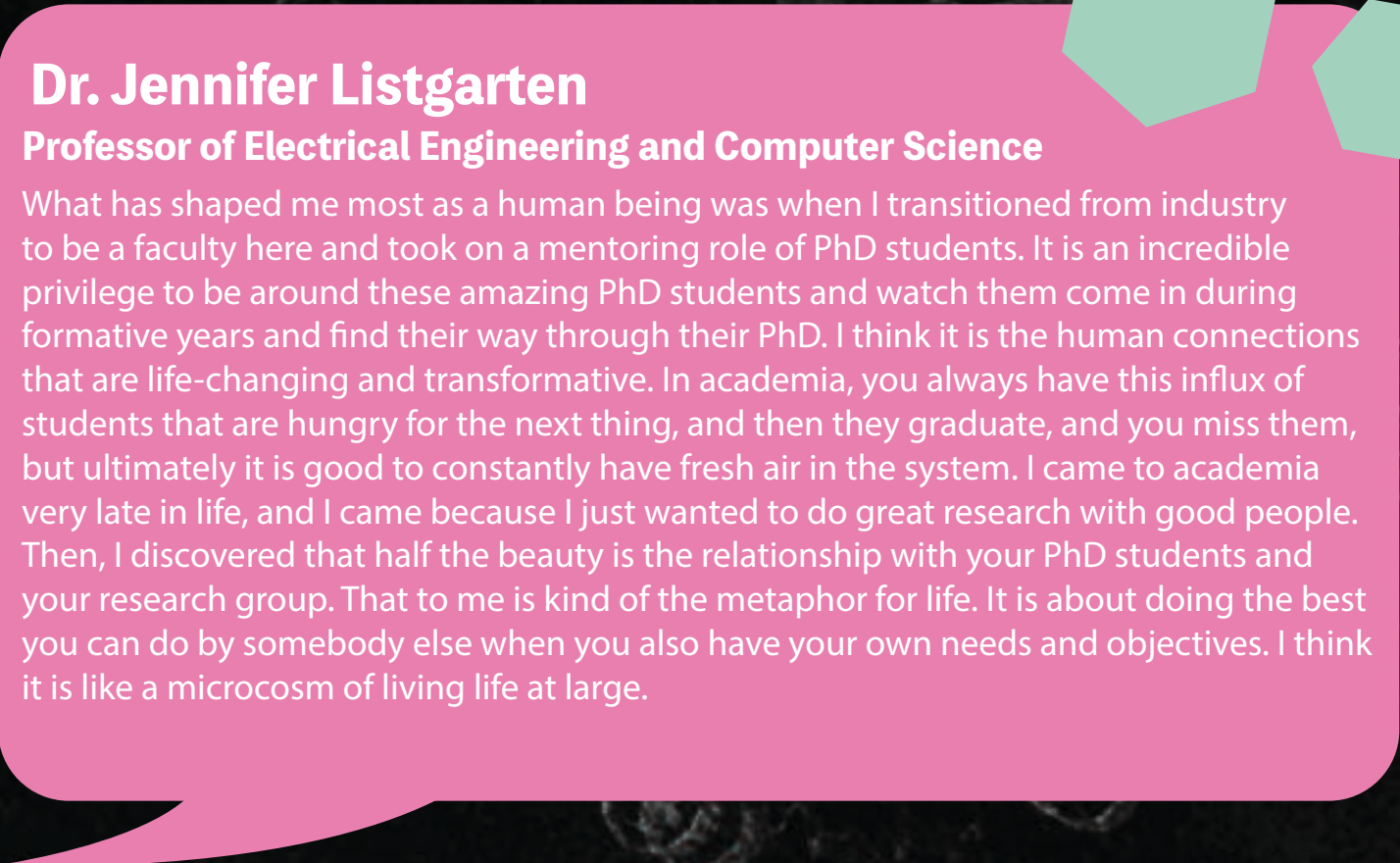


Dr. Hillel Adesnik

Associate Professor of Cell Biology, Development and Physiology

I have always been fascinated by the mechanisms of perception and experience. It is such a fundamental question: how do people see things differently? Do we all see the same rose the same way — is it really “red” to all of us? This kind of question is usually inaccessible to what we call mechanistic research, the type of science we do here in the lab, where we try to treat perception as an objective reality that we can measure through experiments. What I find especially fascinating is how people might see things differently because of their prior experiences and even just inherently or genetically. Each person might experience something in a slightly different way, and the only way we can really access that is through their subjective reports. It is always interesting to hear other people’s perspectives, especially when it comes to visual illusions. I love looking at visual illusions — I believe most people do — and I often show them to my kids. What’s amazing is that, now that they can talk, they get the illusions immediately. It is actually really hard to find visual illusions that even young children do not see. There are developmental stages where perception changes, but even very young kids perceive many illusions the same way adults do, which I find fascinating. Sometimes when I am teaching, I show visual illusions and ask the students to raise their hands if they can see them. By and large, everyone does, and yet it is still interesting to wonder how different people experience those illusions differently — what is happening in their brains, or how their life experiences might influence that. I would love to find scientific ways to ask that question, but I do not know what that would look like yet. We are pretty good as scientists at testing objective reality, but we are not as good at exploring subjective reality — the personal, lived experience of perception. Maybe that is something I find personally intriguing, both in and outside of the lab.

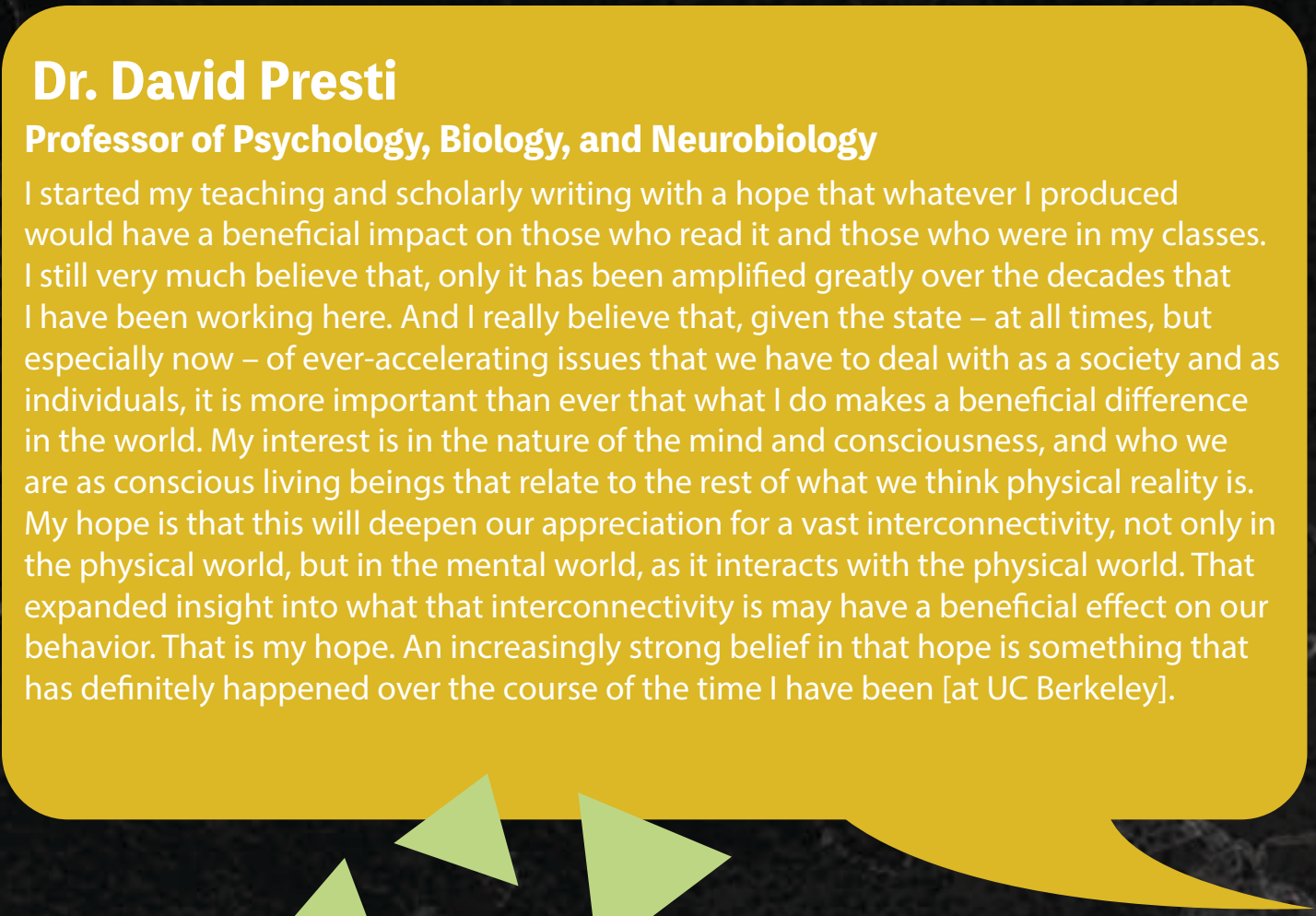




Dr. Jennifer Listgarten

Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science

What has shaped me most as a human being was when I transitioned from industry to be a faculty here and took on a mentoring role of PhD students. It is an incredible privilege to be around these amazing PhD students and watch them come in during formative years and find their way through their PhD. I think it is the human connections that are life-changing and transformative. In academia, you always have this influx of students that are hungry for the next thing, and then they graduate, and you miss them, but ultimately it is good to constantly have fresh air in the system. I came to academia very late in life, and I came because I just wanted to do great research with good people. Then, I discovered that half the beauty is the relationship with your PhD students and your research group. That to me is kind of the metaphor for life. It is about doing the best you can do by somebody else when you also have your own needs and objectives. I think it is like a microcosm of living life at large.



Dr. David Presti

Professor of Psychology, Biology, and Neurobiology

I started my teaching and scholarly writing with a hope that whatever I produced would have a beneficial impact on those who read it and those who were in my classes. I still very much believe that, only it has been amplified greatly over the decades that I have been working here. And I really believe that, given the state – at all times, but especially now – of ever-accelerating issues that we have to deal with as a society and as individuals, it is more important than ever that what I do makes a beneficial difference in the world. My interest is in the nature of the mind and consciousness, and who we are as conscious living beings that relate to the rest of what we think physical reality is. My hope is that this will deepen our appreciation for a vast interconnectivity, not only in the physical world, but in the mental world, as it interacts with the physical world. That expanded insight into what that interconnectivity is may have a beneficial effect on our behavior. That is my hope. An increasingly strong belief in that hope is something that has definitely happened over the course of the time I have been [at UC Berkeley].