

Short interviews with the keynote speakers

Fabio Lucidi

1. Please identify a moment that changed the course of your career.

I was a Ph.D. student at that time. Two papers have been just published from my research activity focused on sleep regulation when a scientific society aimed to promote that research field opening a call for young researchers (under thirty years) to participate in a summer school, without any fees. Today, one has several chances to participate in summer school in any research area, but at that time it was quite a rare opportunity. I participated to that call, together with young researchers from the whole Europe and I have been so lucky to be selected. During two fantastic weeks in Paris, I had lessons from the most important scholars in Europe in that field, the opportunity to exchange autonomously experience and ideas with young researchers coming from several countries in Europe. I learned that the passion of a young student is the same of an experienced researcher, the research work is a fantastic challenge ever and wherever, without any cultural barrier or geographical boundary. When I came back to Italy my career's goals were finally clear and the direction was definitively oriented toward scientific research. Now my research interests are moved into different directions from the ones I was following at that time, but I still keep the same passion that those experience gifted to me. I am very grateful to those who offered me that opportunity and I am convinced that supporting young researchers' motivation is one of the most important aims for any scientific society.

2. Please identify one journal article that all psychologists should read (not an article that you authored):

Some of the most powerful ideas are also the clearest – and are explained in a so simple and net way that a child can understand them. Actually, while reading the publication of Albert Bandura's 1977 titled "Self-Efficacy: Toward A Unifying Theory of Behavior Change," I perceived myself as a child (I was very young at that time) facing with a general, complex theoretical framework of an extraordinary heuristic power. That theoretical framework was absolutely complicated in its several aspects, but explained in a so fascinating and clear way to be understandable even by myself.

That article has been an incredible heuristic value in promoting psychological research on self-efficacy, and this term is now ubiquitous in psychology and related fields. Furthermore, since efficacy beliefs play a crucial role in psychological adjustment, psychological problems, physical health, as well as professionally guided and self-guided behavioral change strategies it also has had a great impact on several clinical and health psychologists in their activities. I think that all psychologists should be aware about what this theory states, about how expectations of personal efficacy determine in terms of behavior and behavioural changes, about the factors influencing the cognitive processing of efficacy and about the differential power of diverse therapeutic procedures based on the cognitive mechanisms proposed by Bandura. I think that every psychologist, even those who are very far from the social-cognitive theoretical frameworks can learn a general lesson from reading this article: a psychologist should be prepared to accept complexity without any fear,

but even without any unnecessary complication.

3. What is the most important lesson that you have learnt?

To combine commitments and optimism in research and teaching activities. I think that strong belief and acceptance of the research's values such as intellectual honesty and searching for truth following ethical rules, willingness to exert considerable effort to increase one's knowledges, skills, and ability to pursue his or her autonomous research goals are the key factors for a satisfactory and passionate research activity.

4. What advice would you offer to young psychologists?

To follow their work interests and to foster their autonomous motivations and then to be prepared to overcome difficulties, being positive in this not-easy professional (and historical) period. The economic crisis made things quite difficult and there is a diffuse need of psychology at several levels. The demonstrable contribution that psychologists can offer embraces individuals, organizations and society. Psychologists have the possibility to contribute to health and wellness at a personal and societal level. Young colleagues have the possibility to contribute to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of public, private and third sector organizations; to improve social welfare and cohesion; to increase economic prosperity, wealth creation and regeneration; to enhance cultural enrichment and quality of life. We have new domains to study, new assessment' tools, new interventions methods, and new information about how psychological processes work at more basic and broader levels. Recent theories and methods in health psychology stem from collaborations of social and clinical psychologist with neuro-scientist, cognitive psychologist, and developmental psychologist. Psychology is going to develop new multidisciplinary knowledge collaborating with medicine, economy, engineering, genetics, and cybernetics, only to do some example. In this exciting time no one can make

exact prevision about the future. Young colleagues should engage their skills in the challenges that seems more attractive to their own autonomous interest and they should be continuously motivated to develop more complex skills. They must not forget the role of self-efficacy in generating options and creating work opportunities, overwhelming evidence exists in support of the influence of efficacy in the cultivation of intrinsic interests and other work motivations. Young psychologists (especially young researchers) are then required to develop robust work efficacy beliefs, high career aspirations and a sense of agency in career pursuits, but they also need to develop a strong efficacy for managing professional related demands along with their personal aspirations and values. The advice that I would offer to myself as a professor is: sharing knowledge to enhance competence and autonomy, and cultivating a strong sense of agency is what one can do for assisting young psychologists, who, in order to realize their goals in their work and in their personal life may experience special difficulties to overcome.

5. What would you research if you have unlimited money and resources?

It is quite difficult to assume this perspective for me, since limitation of money and resources is the typical condition of an academic researcher in Italy, where basic research appears to be somehow neglected and where university funding has dwindled to a bare minimum. I would probably study self-regulation and consciousness in a deeper way, considering the new and powerful measurement tools provided by technology. Consciousness provides the information base for thinking about events, planning, constructing courses of action and reflecting on the adequacy of one's thinking and actions. Mental events are brain activities, they are not immaterial entities existing apart from neural systems, but cognitive processes are not only emergent brain activities, they also exert determinative influence. In my view, human mind is generative, creative, proactive, and self-

reflective not just reactive. According to a social cognitive perspective, stripped of personal factors and agentic capability of decision and action, people are devoid of any subjectivity, deliberative regulation, or personal identity. These are fundamental factors in understanding human health related decision and health behavior. At the same time, recent advances in cognitive neurosciences leads to new proposals to describe the relation between intentionality and consciousness. Cognitive neuroscience and related technologies constitute a multifaceted discipline that is burgeoning on many fronts defining new challenges to the detection of psychological states and intentions. There is little doubt that great progress has been made over the last 10 to 15 years, in understanding the physiological and neural bases for psychological processes and behavior. The study of the processes involved in people's "self-regulation" of health behavior should consider these progresses but there are no exhaustive lists of issues that need to be addressed and questions that need to be answered. These include the nature of psychological states, the nature of neurophysiological and neural activity, and barriers to identification of mental states and intentions.

6. Please identify one challenge that health psychology should be addressing, but is not.

Behavioral intentions are seen as a key ingredient if one want to understand why and how people engage themselves in various healthy behaviors and refrain from risky habits. Researchers made a great effort in order to identify variables and psychological processes that are able to influence behavioral intentions. Intentions, in turn are strictly related to behaviors. Despite this strong relationship, we are still largely unaware about psychological process that leads from intention to action. For instances, we know that medium size experimentally induced changes in intention resulted in trivial-sized changed in behavior. Whether or not the intentions are translated

into action is a focal challenge for research in health psychology. The problem is still unresolved but the debate is clearly open and this line of enquiry has generated the term "intention-behavior" gap in the scientific community.

Rory O'Connor

1. Please identify a moment that changed the course of your career.

As a second year undergraduate psychology student at Queen's University Belfast, with some colleagues, I organised the Psychology Students of Ireland conference in Belfast. As part of this conference, we invited Professor Marie Johnston to be a keynote speaker (apparently she only agreed because in my letter of invitation I said I would guarantee Derek and her a great time!). Although, I had read some health psychology as part of my degree course, it hadn't really grabbed by attention. However, I was really impressed by Marie, her talk and her work – and have been hooked on health psychology ever since (incidentally, Marie and Derek had an amazing time in Belfast).

2. Please identify one journal article that all psychologists should read (not an article that you authored).

Strack, F., Deutsch, R. (2004). Reflective and impulsive determinants of social behavior. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 8, 220-247.

3. What is the most important lesson that you have learnt?

Early on in my career, I didn't stretch myself as much as I should have and I kept within my academic comfort zone. I turned down some research opportunities because I didn't know whether I had the appropriate skills to successfully deliver on the opportunities. On reflection, I did have the skills but my reluctance was a confidence issue; so the lesson is that it is important to

believe in yourself and (within reason) say yes to research opportunities that are outside your comfort zone. Grasping such chances should help to foster your academic development and career progression. Psychologists have an impressive range of skills, and we should make more use of them!

4. What advice would you offer to young psychologists?

Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate! In Glasgow, we have set up an Early Career Researchers' (ECRs) Forum on Suicide and Self-harm which meets annually. The feedback from this event is fantastic (attracting delegates from across Europe)– but one of the things it does really well is it helps ECRs to build research networks which can lead to collaborations. Psychological research is almost always a team endeavour, so developing fruitful collaborations early on in your career is really beneficial. In addition to improving your psychological research, such collaborations should provide a supportive network when the inevitable rejections (that we all get) come in. They are also people who you can celebrate your successes with. It is really important that we celebrate our successes! Also, be nice. Treat everyone you work with – junior or senior – in the same way that you would like to be treated. Finally, follow your dreams!

5. What would you research if you have unlimited money and resources?

The research that I do spans public health and clinical research and it straddles both clinical and health psychology. So, If I had unlimited money and resources I would develop and test the effectiveness of multilevel complex interventions (based on the existing public health / psychological evidence base) across different countries which would be sufficiently large (participants in the 100,000s) to determine whether they could actually reduce suicide. This would be really exciting because, given the low base rate for suicide, very few intervention studies are ever sufficiently powered to detect changes in

suicide (as a result, proxy outcomes like suicide attempts are usually employed).

6. Please identify one challenge that health psychology should be addressing, but is not.

Although there has been progress in recent years, we need to expand our work in low and middle-income countries (LMICs). In terms of understanding the determinants of health and wellbeing and developing interventions to help the most vulnerable, we have so much to offer. Taking an example from my own field, the vast majority of all suicides in the world are in LMICs (75% of the world's 804,000 suicides annually occur in LMICs), but the overwhelming majority of research is conducted in high-income countries. As a result, efforts to reduce suicide in these countries have not been very effective, unsurprisingly. Cross-cultural health psychology is vital to the future of the discipline.

Sherry Pagoto

1. Please identify a moment that changed the course of your career.

In 2003, I was awarded a 5 year career development grant that allowed me to shift my career from clinical to research. I had strong clinical training in graduate school but lacked a strong research background. On my post-doctoral fellowship I decided I wanted a research career to explore the unanswered questions I encountered in my clinical work. The moment this grant was funded I received the time and resources to make that transition.

2. Please identify one journal article that all psychologists should read (not an article that you authored).

Recently, a paper I keep coming back to is Applying What We Know to Accelerate Cancer Prevention by Graham Colditz. We have the knowledge to prevent half of all cancers and he lays out the reasons why we have failed to put that

knowledge to action. As behavioral scientists, we need to be at the forefront of solutions that push implementation of that knowledge forward. Here is the link

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22461645>

3. What is the most important lesson that you have learnt?

We have a dire need to educate the public about behavioral science and how science works in general. In the US we are learning the consequences of poorly educating the masses about science and behavioral science in particular.

4. What advice would you offer to young psychologists?

If you go into research it is important that you continue to interface with your target population so that their faces and experiences don't turn into data points. If you go into clinical care, it is important that you continue to interface with the research literature so that patient care is guided by the best evidence of the time.

5. What would you research if you have unlimited money and resources?

I would study what I study now but I would push forward my much bigger, high risk ideas that would be very difficult to get past funding agencies.

6. Please identify one challenge that health psychology should be addressing, but is not.

We have access to so many new ways to measure behavior, including big data, mobile technology, social network data, as well as new methodologies by which to study and model behavior. I'd love to see more work focused on leveraging these to develop new conceptual models of behavior change.

Annmarie Cano

1. Please identify a moment that changed the course of your career.

In 2002, I was traveling with my husband in the Netherlands and Belgium for his research and

"cold-called" Dr. Geert Crombez at the University of Gent to say that I would love to visit his lab and learn more about his research. I had never met or corresponded with him before and I assumed he would be too busy. To my delight, he invited me to his lab and set up time to meet with his team. He was a gracious host and the visit stimulated a number of research ideas. That visit also marked the beginning of a successful collaboration with one of his post-docs at the time, Dr. Liesbet Goubert. I will always be thankful for his hospitality and generosity.

2. Please identify one journal article that all psychologists should read (not an article that you authored).

There are so many to choose from! How about a book? Fordyce's Behavioral Methods for Chronic Pain and Illness (2014) edited by Chris Main, Frank Keefe, Johan Valeyen, and Kevin Vowles, is a good blend of old and new. It reprints Fordyce's seminal work applying operant principles to the treatment of pain and each chapter includes a commentary by a different researcher in pain and health psychology.

3. What is the most important lesson that you have learnt?

It is impossible for one person to do everything. As an early career psychologists, I thought I could figure everything out on my own but I quickly realized that it was not true. Speaking with colleagues and collaborating with them not only stimulated new ideas I couldn't have developed on my own but these activities were also quite fun.

4. What advice would you offer to young psychologists?

Seek out multiple mentors from multiple institutions. There are many experienced psychologists who want to mentor and guide the next generation so do not fear that mentors will say they do not have time. Mentors can introduce you to people, collaborate with you, give you greater confidence about taking the next step in your career. You can then "pay it forward" as you

progress through your own career.

5. What would you research if you have unlimited money and resources?

This is a tough question as I think the resource that limits me most is time. If I had unlimited money, however, I would like to investigate large-scale public health interventions to improve quality of life rather than smaller localized intervention studies. I am also quite interested in equity and access to higher education, but again, time is the most limiting factor for me.

6. Please identify one challenge that health psychology should be addressing, but is not.

The international migration crisis seems an important and timely topic to be studied by health psychologists. Some research is focusing on mental health of migrants and rightly so, but there is a lot more to do to help this vulnerable and growing population.