Mentor and the 'Tea and Cookies' Mentorship Approach: A Conversation With Ian Winchester

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Abstract: This article seeks to explore the complex relationship between mentors and mentees and how it may impact the development of junior researchers' potential. The study applies an ethnography approach to explore the perceptions of experiences of Ian Winchester, a scholar with over 50 years of research and teaching who has mentored hundreds of doctoral and master's level graduate students at two large Canadian universities, the University of Toronto and the University of Calgary. It is an ethnographic conversation between the mentor and a mentee on the journey of mentorship in academia. The results are drawn from Winchester's answers to ten semi-structured questions guiding many novice researchers on the path to humanities and social sciences scholarship. This ethnographic conversation may contribute to a better understanding of the challenges facing current mentorship practices in academia. It may also partly serve as a guide to those just entering the practice, whether as mentors or mentees.

Résumé : Cet article cherche à comprendre la relation complexe entre les mentors et les mentorés et comment elle peut avoir un impact sur le développement potentiel des jeunes chercheurs. Cette étude ethnographique examine les expériences du professeur Ian Winchester, un chercheur avec plus de 50 ans de recherche et d'enseignement. Il a encadré des centaines d'étudiants diplômés au doctorat et à la maîtrise dans deux grandes universités canadiennes, l'Université de Toronto et l'Université de Calgary. Il s'agit d'une conversation ethnographique entre le mentor et un mentoré sur le cheminement du mentorat dans le milieu universitaire. Les résultats sont tirés des réponses de Winchester à dix questions semi-structurées sur comment il a guidé de

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nombreux chercheurs débutants sur la voie de la recherche en sciences humaines et sociales. Cette conversation ethnographique peut contribuer à une meilleure compréhension des défis auxquels font face les pratiques actuelles de mentorat dans le milieu universitaire. Il peut également servir de guide à ceux qui viennent d'entrer dans la pratique, que ce soit en tant que mentors ou mentorés.

Introduction

Mentorship has long been an important practice in academia. In the early pre-university movement in Paris, the story of the mentorship relationship between the then 40-year-old Abelard, the great medieval logician, and his brilliant 19-year-old female student Heloise as mentor and mentee, is a story celebrated in poetry, myth, and legend and in their own correspondence. It is the first real documentation we have of such a mentor/ mentee relationship that was academically successful but personally disastrous for both. It is the former this study wishes to encourage and the latter to avoid. Their late correspondence after Abelard had become the head of a male mendicant order and Heloise a mother superior is available for all to read (Lombardi, 2021). Today Canada's universities have attracted a rich and diverse graduate student population, both men and women from all over the world, in need of such mentorship.

Our chief informant in this study is Dr. Ian Winchester, who has mentored hundreds of successful masters and doctoral students from around the world at the Universities of Toronto and Calgary. Winchester is interviewed by Dr. Daniela Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, whom Winchester mentored during her master's program at the University of Calgary. Winchester's approach can perhaps best be described as "tea and cookies" mentorship, where he takes a personal interest in what the student is interested in researching, what they already know about the topic, and perhaps what they have previously contributed to the topic. Through in-depth conversation, Winchester encourages students to develop their ideas, boosting their confidence in their growing research skills and sometimes exploring unusual literature to enrich their knowledge of their topic of interest. As you will see, Winchester's personal outlook may have been strongly influenced by his wonderfully bright and welcoming wife, Gunilla. They would jointly invite his graduate students in for a "tea and cookies"

conversation, which translated into an ideal environment for innovative ideas to flourish.

This study applies an ethnographical approach in order to explore the relationship between mentors and mentees, and it is impractical on the development of scholarship in graduate students. It focuses on the perceived experiences of a scholar who has successfully graduated a wide range of mentees, among whom were many international students who often struggle with culture and language nuances and who need to integrate their old and new knowledge into a Canadian context. Thus, this study is based on an interview with Ian Winchester, unfortunately only a few weeks after his beloved Gunilla passed away. Between grief and hope, Winchester shares his remarkable journey from his own "tea and cookies" beginning at the University of Oxford in England to many years of guiding graduate students at the University of Toronto and latterly the University of Calgary.

The "tea and cookies" mentorship is an informal approach to mentorship, described as meeting the student as frequently as needed, to discuss "how things are going" and to listen to the student's discoveries and interests slowly dev over reflection and recommended readings, and to discuss challenges and set goals as authors such as Campbell, Crisp and Cruz have suggested in their writings(Campbell &Campbell, 2009; Crisp & Cruz, 2009). These meetings often took place in Winchester's living room with a long table covered with books where tea and cookies were always offered, creating a warm and tranquil environment where exciting knowledge naturally emerged.

Literature Review

As Crisp and Cruz (2009) point out, mentorship is an old concept, but one for which there is no consensus as to a definition. It is as old as the Greek epic *The Odyssey*, as it is there that Odysseus had placed his son Telemachus under the education and guardianship of Mentor, the son of Alcimus, while *Odysseus* was off fighting the Trojan War. In a recent study in academic contexts in post-secondary education, Hoover and Lucas (2023) describe mentorship as "an ongoing helpful, professional relationship between professor and student that both facilitates and fosters academic growth and accomplishment and involves a significant investment in time an effort" (p. 1).

Mentorship has been characterized as having different approaches, broadly divided into formal and informal mentoring

practices (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Luna & Cullen, 1995). Formal mentorship interactions are often guided by institutional policies or guidelines, consisting of periodic meetings between mentors and mentees over the graduate program years. Informal mentorship involves a more personal approach based on a mutual trust relationship over time. It is often conversational and reflective, not

structured. Meetings may be short or long as needed. Campbell and Campbell (1987) and Crisp and Cruz (2009) suggest that informal mentorship evolves over time spontaneously without a mandated structure. It is a mentor and protégé relationship between a senior and a junior scholar seeking to explore questions on a specific topic that may last a few months to years and sometimes a lifetime.

Mullen (2007) argues that the mentorship provided by faculty members is key to graduate students' scholarly and career growth. Such academic faculty members characteristically guide students in degree-related progression as well as in research, publication, and subsequent career opportunities. Yet, despite its impact on graduate students' academic and subsequent career success prospects, mentorship is still an under-researched area in general (Hoover & Lucas, 2023; Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Some areas, however, as Crisp and Cruz (2009) indicate, such as the relationship between mentorship practices and graduate student retention and graduation rates, has in fact been the study of many research reports.

Some areas such as the mental health of Graduate students struggling to navigate the academic world, especially when lacking support from mentors are under-researched (Hoover & Lucas, 2023; Crisp and Cruz, 2009). Thayer (2000) and Hoover and Lucas (2023) suggest that regardless of the area, mentorship has an essential role in scholarship growth, especially among minority groups such as international students, immigrant graduate students, and first-generation and low-income students. The scarceness of research on the topic may affect the quality of mentorship practices offered to graduate students and lead to low degree completion, something noticed especially among vulnerable students (Thayer, 2000).

Methodology

This study applies an ethnography approach to explore a scholar's many nuances and unique, insightful experiences throughout a long career, mentoring graduate students (Reeves et al., 2008; Sharma

& Sarkar, 2019). Reeves et al. (2008) argue that ethnography characteristically "provide rich, holistic insights into people's views and actions…through observations and interviews" (p. 1). Ethnography is an ideal approach as it allows us to explore in depth the many different aspects of experiences within mentorship.

The study applies a qualitative research method and has one participant. The data was collected through an audio-recorded interview composed of 10 semi-structured questions, transcribed, and sent to the interviewer to review. The findings of this study are described based on the interpretations of the responses provided to the semi-structured interview questions (Reeves et al., 2008). This paper provides the interview transcription of the data.

Limitations

As the literature suggests, mentorship is crucial to graduate students' success (Hoover & Lucas, 2023; Crisp & Cruz, 2009). However, this ethnography study intends to contribute to the narrative surrounding mentorship, not offer solutions for the challenges such process may display.

The study is also limited in terms of demographics; it has two participants, the researcher - Daniela Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, as the interviewer and the subject, Ian Winchester, who shares his insightful reflection on his mentorship experiences during the course of many decades, helping to master's and Ph.D. students as the interviewee.

The Interview Transcripts

Interviewer: Dr. Daniela Fontenelle-Tereshchuk
Interviewee: Dr. Ian W. Winchester

1. Who is Ian Winchester?

A man who it's been happily married for 57 years to Gunilla [his late spouse]. Who is supported by someone who could see all the flaws in my arguments and help me to get make them better. Someone who knew much more about many things than I did, and who therefore was the perfect companion to someone who ended up working with graduate students. Because if I didn't know

something, she might. She was the kind of person who, if I had trouble, for example, making sense of the text in French or in German or, for that matter in Mandarin or an ancient or modern Greek she, could help me and who is always happy to hear me tell her about obscurer things that I had come across in the word.

So let's say, who is the person I am? Well, I can tell you a bit about [pause], that I came across this wonderful person when I was traveling about one summer after I had been teaching physics for the University of Alberta, and what was at that time the Lethbridge French plant. I was traveling all over Europe, and I hit Switzerland and aboard the train was a young woman sitting in first class, because I was on my first class Eurail pass. She was going to Geneva, and I said I wanted to go there too so we sat near one another and chatted on our way to Geneva.

When I got there [Geneva], she said: - Have you got a place to stay? and I said – no, I had no idea where I was staying. She said: - well, I'm staying in a pension near the University of Geneva and maybe they would have a place for you. So, I went with her. and I ended up in this place, a short walk or so from the main campus of the University of Geneva, right downtown. Madame Cord run the pension; she was the former wife of the head of the International Red Cross in Paris. She basically took in students, fed them, and housed them while they were studying at the university. She took me in to eat, but because it was full of young women, she sent me off to live with one of her brothers, who lived nearby, to sleep, but then I could come over and eat at her place during the course of the day. She produced these wonderful French meals.

Anyway…[pause]. However, on the first day, the first meal was going to be a six o'clock meal, so she sent me off to go and maybe sit in the University Park, which is a block away by the main university building until 6:00 o'clock, and then come home. So, I went and sat in the park, and I watched the people and the dogs playing in there. In the great distance was a very bouncy little dashed running around and making it very hard for the person who was walking with her presently.

It was a dog that just kept running away and very hard to pick up. But the pair of them, the girl in the distance and her dog came towards me, and the dog was running to try and run up to me and the girl caught and picked him, and walked past me carrying the dog and went down the street in the direction of my Pension.

I looked at my watch and it was going on for 6:00 o'clock, so I stood up and I went down the street right after the girl with the dog, and to my astonishment and surprise, the girl and dog turned out to be going where I was going to go, and shortly after they got in, I entered the door. You may know that are French-designed apartments, Geneva is a French-speaking city. There was a sign saying where to place your boots on the first floor as it doesn't have an apartment. You have to walk upstairs to the first apartment, and you normally take an elevator up to the other apartments in this tall building. Lo and behold! [I noticed] the girl and dog are halfway up the stairs. As I approached, the girl picked up the dog and held it. I don't know whether she was going to throw the dog at me or to hold the dog from jumping on me. But anyway, I passed them on the stairs, went up, and knocked on the door. The girl was behind me said… her first words to me in French, [pause] she said: J'ai la clé, monsieur. Here, I have a key, Sir. That moment the young lady who helped Madame Cord opens the door, and we all went in. It turns out that that was the woman who was going to be my wife who said: "J'ai la clé, monsieur."

2. What was your journey with mentorship as a graduate student and how do you see such an experience influenced, how such an experience, influenced your path to mentorship?

Well. I'm afraid that my journey with Mentorship is [like my journey as] a graduate student. Also, [as it] connects centrally to the fact that I was introduced to the young lady [Gunilla], who became my wife. But that wasn't immediate. I had the thought of being a graduate student after I had finished teaching physics for a year, for the University of Alberta in Lethbridge. I was going to go off and do a Ph.D. at the University of Toronto. But my mother came down with cancer, and so I thought: - Well, I've done everything for entry into Medicine. You know, all the courses that would have been required just in the process of doing my honours degree in physics.

So, perhaps [pause] I should see if I could get into medical school. So, I applied for medical school. And lo and behold! I was admitted. But I didn't have any money to go because [a degree in] Medicine was more expensive. That's how I ended up working for a year in Lethbridge to try to make a little money, so I could go into medicine. In the meanwhile, I thought, before I do something as

desperate as that I better spend the summer in, you know, traveling about. So, that's how I went to Europe and ended up meeting Gunilla, whom I told you about earlier.

I was about halfway through Medicine [medical school], when I spent a second summer (I spent the first summer working for the Dean of Medicine doing research for him). I worked for a Professor of Medicine, as such looking at automating or attempting to automate medical diagnosis. While I was studying for my degree in physics, I'd spent three summers at the Atomic Energy of Canada, learning how to program a large mainframe computer and, I thought, it must be or it would be a good idea to be able to automate medical diagnosis for which one had been given the symptoms. What is the actual likelihood of such and such is a disease? So, I spent a summer working on that. And that went pretty well. And so, I thought: - well, why don't I then work on a joint degree in Medicine and computing science? So, I also enrolled in a master's degree in computing science as my first graduate experience.

And again, my interest was in trying to automate medical diagnosis and a professor of heart surgery gave me some very good data. And my… I thought my work was going on extremely well but during this time, I had the happiness of finding this girl whom I met in Switzerland. She came to Canada and wanted to learn a bit about Canadian banking. So, we saw one another quite a bit during the year of medicine and while I was also working in computing.

[pause] Oh, but one thing led to another, and one day, this young lady said to me: - "you know, you've got to be with someone, it might as well be Gunilla." Which I took to be a proposal. So I agreed that she was dead right. And that I would be delighted if she would marry me and she said, of course, yes. So, we headed off to Sweden that summer to get married. And they [her family] took me in. The next year of these [pause] sort of what I saw was my combined, medical degree and my master's degree in computing science [pause]...But about three months after Gunilla and I married, she suddenly said she could not leave the bed. Besides banking, she was working on a history degree at the University of Alberta. She said: - You know, I can't now hold a pen and I can't feel what's in my purse. And I can't feel what's in my pocket. There is something wrong with my hand. So, I happened to have the right connections in the medical school and sent her off to see a neurologist. And after a horrifying variety of really miserable tests,

they concluded that she probably had multiple sclerosis, which is common among Swedish girls, and she was a Swedish girl.

What about scholarly work? Well, I thought, yes, of course, we could finish medicine and I could practice medicine, but then I would have hundreds, maybe thousands of patients like Gunilla, my new wife. Her disease, almost certainly, would get worse and worse and worse. And what she was going to need was someone who could look after her, and be with her, when she got worse and worse and worse. So, after talking about it, I concluded that maybe I should leave medicine quietly behind and go often do something else that I really wanted to do anyway. We decided, we'd go off to Oxford and I would become a philosopher. So that's what we did. We headed it off to Oxford. It turned out to be a wonderful thing to do. I had five enormously pleasant years at Oxford, where I did two degrees, a so-called B. Phil and a D. Phil.

The B. Phil [degree] was considered a professional degree in philosophy. In those days, Oxford had a professional degree in Medicine as a Bachelor of Medicine – BM and the professional law degree was an LLB. So, a professional degree in philosophy was now conceived as B. Phil., and I did that. It was rather fun, and I had the pleasure of being mentored for the first time in anything I had ever done at university by a wonderful man called Rom Harré, who was a lecturer in the philosophy of Science or Indeed, the only person working in Philosophy of Science at Oxford at that time.

And I would say that my mentoring understanding, such as I had one, came largely from Rom Harré. Rom Harré's secret was not only that he took every one of his students seriously and assumed that they were absolutely able to converse with him across the board without looking up or down up, but straight and straight across but also that Rom Harré was married to a wonderful woman called Hattie. Hattie not only supported him, but also made sure that when graduate students were invited to their home, perhaps for a glass of wine, or a conversation, or perhaps an evening meal, she would look after the graduate students too.

And so, I realized that the most important thing you can know as a mentor is having a companion. In my case, my wife also helped to look after my graduate students. [Someone] who converses with them, when I'm not in the room; who supports them and lets them know that not only is Ian behind them, but she is behind them too. And that's probably the most important thing I ever learned about

mentoring is that mentoring is not something that can be done entirely alone. You need help. And the best kind of help you can get is a supportive person in your household. So, whenever you invite your students home, perhaps for 'tea and cookies', perhaps for a meal, perhaps for breakfast, perhaps on the weekend. That they have the support of the rest of your family too. And in this case, there was in my case, my wife. And I've heard that from Rom Harré, of course, my tutor at Oxford. So that's probably the most important thing I learned about mentorship early on. And I tried to do the same. I would say that the model of Rom Harré was for me, the model that I tried to follow.

3. What are the things you learn during this time that you are most grateful for?

Well, the first thing I guess is that the kind of work I was doing was appreciated by my supervisor or my tutor. And the way that they worked at Oxford is perhaps a little unusual for universities around the world. But there's a certainly standard approach that Oxford worked well for many centuries. And that is that each student is assigned a tutor or a supervisor, but characteristically called your tutor, and you meet that person once a week or once, every two weeks depending upon the degree of sophistication, you may have and so, I met with Harré initially every week. And what he would do, is talk to me about topic or problems in philosophy that were central and interesting. And the kind of thing that you might, ever ultimately [pause], If you ever face in examination, you have to know something about. He would assign it, he would suggest to me a question in philosophy that needed to be answered. He would also suggest a couple of readings usually by classic authors. They could be practically anybody, but they [pause]but people like John Locke, for example, would be a natural one. David Hume would be a natural one, there were many contemporary ones too, Immanuel Kant, Or Baruch Spinosa. A number of authors who had said something on the kind of topic or question that he thought I should think about for the week. The idea was that I would go away and think about the question myself, read what he had suggested, and potentially had been written about some of these authors and then write an essay trying to answer the question myself. The idea was also to write it in such a way that it could be handed in a day before

I had to meet with my tutor, so he had a chance to read it. So, I realized first of all that you had to get your work done straight away and that you had to get it done in good time so that your tutor could read it and be ready to talk with you about it. And what that meant, is that your tutor was going to take you deadly seriously. Maybe you answered the question better than anybody else ever did and you would have a serious conversation with him.

So, the first thing I would say, I learned deeply is that you must take your students and their work dead seriously and treat them as if they might have answered the question that they're trying to answer better than anybody else. Perhaps they did, perhaps they didn't but at any rate you're going to have a good conversation with them about it, a serious conversation, not talking down to them, not trying to tell them what the truth is, but trying to investigate what they think.

4. Which challenges shaped your approach to mentorship?

Goodness gracious! Probably, I mean, in terms of working with students and trying to follow, you might say, the 'Oxford Way' and particularly the Rom Harré approach (New, 2022) . I would say that the hardest part was coping with my own laziness. My own lack of knowledge and to be ready to treat my students seriously, as splendid potential scholars that they were. I think, one always had to keep in mind that… here you're dealing with a young mind that is trying to think, and is usually successfully thinking originally, and that you have to treat each and every one of your students' thoughts with all the seriousness that you can master. You must never dismiss something that you maybe think is wrong, or that you think you disagree with. But [rather] investigate further in conversation with the student because it might turn out, in fact, they've had an insight that has completely bypassed you. um, So, I'd say the hardest part was again, overcoming my own ignorance. My own laziness, perhaps, my own stupidity to try to treat everything the students wrote or said with the just seriousness it deserved.

5. **When you were my supervisor, one of my most inspiring experiences was coming to you with my mind overwhelmed with information and curiosities, and not knowing what to do with it. You offered me 'tea and cookies' and we had a conversation about what**

I was interested in. Such a method of mentorship was effective in helping me to calm down, reflect, explore, and organize my thoughts, define my thesis, and make sense of the abundant data I had. My thoughts were free, and I was no longer afraid to write the things I had to say about the data. I let the data speak to me and dictate the results. I remember not taking too many notes [during our meetings]. It was all about thinking, exploring curiosity, and how different things may be connected. You had an incredible knowledge of the literature on different topics and at times, guided me to sources not available online. It also impacted my reading by broadening my understanding of different topics, which contributed to developing my acute analytical skill. Your priceless knowledge had a **significant impact on shaping my identity as a researcher. How do you see the 'tea and cookies' approach?**

Well. The 'tea and cookies' is a process. I think the central idea is the sort of thing that I learned from Hattie [Harré's wife] and Rom Harré, that it's very important to you know, talk about things in a gentle atmosphere. Where there is a sort of a welcoming opportunity and 'tea and cookies' are pretty welcoming by and large. Most people don't refuse them, and I think that works pretty well. I think that, of course, that closely connected with this, is the fact that the supervisor is the mentor, but in this case, he is not to be seen by the student as the mentor, or himself as the person who has all the knowledge.

In fact, another thing that I learned from my wonderful supervisor Rom Harré was that the way in which a supervisor learns something is from their graduate students. That your [mentor's] knowledge grows because of your interaction with them [students] because of the things you've talked about with them, because of the answers they've suggested to you or the particular positions, they've taken when investigating with them those thoughts. [It] teaches you something and so your knowledge grows. It may lead you, of course, to read some other things. It may lead you as a supervisor to go away and write some things. And, of course, I've written many, many things over the years.

I suppose there must be certainly approaching the hundreds that have come out of conversations or that have come out of things that later I realized the importance that we're connected with them. In fact working with graduate students, I don't think I have ever

used a graduate student's direct idea or anything, but what I do think is that working with graduate students triggers in you, thoughts, potentially on your own that would never have been triggered if it hadn't been for that interaction. So, I would say that's what I think the most important thing about the 'tea and cookies' process is it's not a one-way process, it's a two-way process.

6. How do you see mentorship in a time when tea and cookies may not be possible in person, as we currently mostly rely on technology to communicate?

Well, of course, over the years, I've had students who were scattered around the world, sometimes even in my classes. I don't know if the University of Toronto, years ago, had any idea what I was doing. But I would have to, I mean, the classes were all face-to-face, but I would have students who were said to be here but their work [the student's work] took them to be in, say, Dubai. [the student say:] – I am in Dubai but I can appear in your class on your computer. So, I would bring in the student on my computer and she, or he would be facing the class and hear what the class was saying. It might have been 15 or 20 students [in class], and she or he could also speak to the class or if they couldn't hear it properly, I could forward it. So, my classes often had this characteristic: at least one [student], sometimes more students who came in on a computer. This is a long time ago. The other thing, of course, is that I often worked with such students on the telephone. So the telephone, you know, as teenagers would know, is actually, quite an intimate instrument. Having someone and only someone there at the other end that's talking with you and vice versa. It's not quite being face-to-face, but it's pretty close. You know, the voice itself has a degree of intimacy.

So I would say that I found that the technology such as we had, which was a telephone at one point, on the early ways of communicating via computer to be quite effective, both in classroom settings and as I say, I have no idea what the University of Toronto would have thought if they knew that I had students who are coming in on the computer because they just couldn't be at the class. Today, we take it for granted, right at that time, it was I guess, an innovation.

7. How many students did you take in? Because they were

struggling with their previous supervisors, even after years, and why do you think would be the reason for that? What should be? They expect the qualities that supervisors should develop.

Well, I don't know. I haven't any idea. Also, I really don't know how many of my students had previous supervisors. I came to know that quite a few of them, did. I never sought a particular student. I never myself ever approached anybody asking them to work with me. But I, what I discovered when I was at the University of Toronto, which is where in fact most of my supervisees were from, the first ones from a very large graduate program. So, it wasn't surprising but the courses I taught were characteristically either philosophy or history. So, the students who came to me came from the other departments or seven or eight departments in the Ontario Institute for Studies and Education, which was a college in the University of Toronto, devoted to graduate study in Education and Research in Education. The students from each of these, seven or eight different departments, would come and take courses in philosophy or in history from me, mostly philosophy, and historical work.

What I did was due to the fact that when I was a student with my wife in Oxford, we needed some money. So, every summer, I would go back to the University of Toronto and do computing work for historians and sociologists at the university. And so, in particular working with the historians, I became acquainted with many facets of modern approaches to Canadian and international History, especially social history using large quantities of data involving whole populations of people. So I taught courses, of course, at the University of Toronto that related to that kind of work as well as the philosophical courses, but because of that, as I say, I thought students from Computing science, from Adult Education, from sociology from, psychology, indeed, I knew the curriculum, of course, in the history and philosophy program. Finally, one also pointed out that I was invited to join the Higher Education Group, which was a University of Toronto organization that was then moved over to OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education), which is too precise, education. So, I was lucky to have students from basically a variety of backgrounds. I didn't only supervise students in the study of mathematics and physics, but also history and adult education and so on, all of these different things. But why did they come to me? I was never sure. But often one day, there'd be a knock on my

door and a student would stick their heads in that had been one of my classes and say: - Any chance you might be my supervisor? and I would usually just say, yes, of course.

And there might turn out later that some of them, had already had supervisors previously that they were not terribly happy with, or the way things were playing. But I never thought about them and I wasn't aware of that, until much later. So, I don't have much to say about the practices of other supervisors. And I would not have any reason why. They did not apparently get along with their students in the manner the students might have wished. I have nothing very interesting to say about that.

8. How important is it to sit down after the data is collected and discussed a student's ideas before they start writing their thesis? Do you think it is possible to let the student write them and give them feedback afterward?

Yes, I do. My tendency, as I say is to assume that the student knows, they are the brightest person. So, I would assume that the student would be the person who would look at their data first and see what they can make of it before they talk to me.

But if, in fact, they wish to talk to me about anything on the way, I'm trying to make myself available, but I didn't think that it was important for me to conceive of myself as the first person to try to make sense of the student's data. I felt it was a student's problem to make sense of their data because that's what they've been working on, and I would have a conversation with them about it, and be interested in their interpretation. And if I was convinced by what they were saying, I would let them know. And if I wasn't, I would probably offer them what the objection that came naturally to me meant. But it wasn't that I thought that they were wrong, but only that they perhaps should consider something else before they ran off. I think that I would tend to encourage the student to think first about their own data.

And only bring it to me to talk about it when they thought they had something to say [about the data], and they could show me the data at the same time, and we could go through it. But what I really wanted was their initial approach because after all, it was their thesis.

9. How do you see the work and life balance?

Ian Winchester: Oh goodness! Well, it depends on, I guess, what you consider to be work and what you consider to be life. I've never seen much distinction between my work and my life because, of course, when one is lucky enough to work at a good research university; and lucky enough as I was to have my entire life, almost entirely devoted to graduate students, and most of those, doctoral students then you're involved in what strikes me as an astonishingly pleasant life just doing that. But of course, you know, I had students from Australia who really wanted to play tennis. And we, my wife and I both loved tennis. And so often in the early morning, maybe at 6:00 in the morning, playing with us I would find ourselves out on a nearby tennis court, and my graduate students.

I can think of, for example, my student and his wife from Australia. His wife became my research assistant, and he was a doctoral student. And we will be out playing doubles tennis at six would in the morning. So, I don't know whether that is part of my mentorship or part of my learning how to play tennis better. You learn so much from your students on the tennis court too. But work and life balance all seem to fit together.

Or I'm playing hockey, for example, with colleagues and students at two in the morning, we would rent a portion of an indoor arena in the middle of winter. For example, again, in Toronto, I would be off playing hockey at two in the morning with students and so on.

Squash is another one, but squash turned out to be dangerous. One of my doctoral students and I were playing and the young lady I referred to earlier from Australia was playing squash with my wife on another court. And I had just hit the ball and turned away and my graduate student I was playing with had a tennis follow through, not a squash shot, but a tennis follow had a tennis through, and I turn my head away. I was wearing metal-rimmed glasses and his racket happily seems to have hit the rim of my glasses. The rim of my glasses sliced my nose, and it was off completely and stuck under my left eye.

The astonishing thing is that when the word got out that I was in there bleeding (it was spurting! As you're getting so much blood to your head coming up through the coronary or carotid arteries). My wife and her Australian companion came running in wearing

their little white suits. They ripped off their white suits to bind to my wounds because I was bleeding so badly. I was always astonished at that. Was that part of life experience or part of mentoring? I don't know. As I said, I've always learned so much more about squash, hockey, tennis, and so on, from my graduate students, and I'm not sure if I ever taught them, but I sure enjoyed it.

I recovered nicely from having my nose sliced off, and I was immediately sent to one of the major hospitals in Toronto, where they put it back in place, and took away the tops. I've got no bone in the top of my nose. But they put it back more or less straight; not quite, but pretty straight and I can breathe out the nostrils. And that's the kind of experience you can have in your life. So I would say, you know, my life and work ended up much the same.

10. What 'mentor' Ian Winchester 'today' would say to Ian Winchester graduate student 'mentee' of 'years ago'?

Oh my! well, I would probably say the most important thing would be to be confident in yourself and your own work. And be unafraid to read even more widely than most suggested to you by your mentor. Be unafraid to pursue topics and questions that strikes you as important, even if they didn't seem to be central to the program you were in. Or be unafraid to think of utterly new problems that need contemplation.

I mean, I think it is true, there are three or four areas in which I probably have put most of my own effort, to some degree in physics when I was young. To some degree in computing work, when I was young, to some degree in historical work, and also in philosophical questions as well as in mathematical things. I was in all of those. There're always new questions arising that nobody else has got thought about. So, it's a real opportunity for you to expand yourself. Also, being your own mentor, talking with yourself, being unafraid to think. All by yourself think about something you can show to the world later. But you should be unafraid to be quiet on your own, you don't always need a mentor. You can do it yourself and I would say that the best thing I'd say about the students that I've had over the years is that they all learned that, and, in the end, you can throw your mentor away and get on with your work all by yourself and they do it splendidly.

Discussion & Findings

The study points to 5 important insights into mentorship:

1. "J'ai la clé, Monsieur"- The importance of academic and family support throughout the graduate student's journey to maintain a balanced lifestyle between professional and personal life, which may contribute to good mental health.

2. The path to graduate school is not always a straight one. Students' experiences are unique, and the 'path' to graduate school is, in reality, a journey made of a combination of tenues paths that lead to an ultimate goal. – Consequently, the need for a more tailored approach to mentorship as students are unique in their research goals and guidance needs favoring informal approaches to mentorship.

3. The 'tea and cookies' is similar to the Oxford approach:

    - Each student is assigned a supervisor/tutor/mentor
    - Mentor and mentee meet once a week or every other week; and throughout the program, depending on where the student is at, more/less often.
    - Talk about the topic or problems in philosophy that were central and interesting that could be used in the examination. Ask a question in philosophy to be answered by the next meeting through suggested readings.
    - Must take into serious consideration the students' ideas and work, allowing them to talk about it. Provide constructive feedback and never tell what 'the truth is' but try to investigate what the student thinks before discarding its merit.

4. Mentee grows into being your own mentor.

> "the most important thing would be to be confident in yourself and your own work. And be unafraid to read even more widely than most suggested to you by your mentor. Be unafraid to pursue topics and questions that the structure was important, even if they didn't seem to be central to the program you were in. Or be unafraid to think of utterly new problems that needed contemplation." Winchester, data extract

5. Encourage independent thinking.

> "I say is to assume that the student knows, they are the brightest person. So, I would assume that the student would be the person who would look at their data first and see what they can make of it before they talk to me." Winchester, data extract

In conclusion, mentorship is an important factor in graduate students' growth. The study advocates for the vital role of mentorship and how a more personalized holistic approach focusing on the uniqueness of students' scholarly visions and experiences can contribute to developing their full academic potential and ultimately improve the overall graduate student experience on professional and personal growth levels.

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