

Shrink Rap Radio #15, November 27, 2005, Islam and Technology

David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka “Dr. Dave” interviews Dr. Doug Davis, Ph.D.

(transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Amy Price)

Introduction: My guest today is Doug Davis, a long time friend from graduate school days at the University of Michigan. Soon after receiving his doctorate there he joined the faculty at Haverford College, an elite school in the so-called Main Line area outside of Philadelphia.

It's been my privilege to know a few bright people in this life, but Doug has always stood out in my mind as one of the brightest and most articulate. Though we've had hardly any 'face time' since those early days of graduate school, we've kept in touch from time to time and it's always wonderful to rediscover that the original rapport between us is alive and well. As you will discover in this interview Doug has had a very multi-faceted career and a single interview hardly does him justice. His wife Susan is an anthropologist and together they've spent a considerable amount of time doing research in Morocco. Given the center stage role that Islam has played today, I thought Doug might be able to shed some light on the Islamic psyche, if there is such a thing.

Dr. Dave: My guest today is Dr Doug David. So Doug, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

Doug Davis: Thank you very much, I'm happy to be shrink-wrapped.

Dr. Dave: (laughs) Yes, we'll get you shrunk, and we'll get you wrapped. Hey, when did you first decide you wanted to become a psychologist?

Davis: Well, it's a tricky question. I must have declared a major my sophomore year at the University of Minnesota, which would have been the fall of 1962 or the spring, probably the spring of 1963, and psychology was a compromise for me. I started out as a physics student in the Institute of Technology. I think because as a bright high school student I assumed science was the 'real thing'. In fact the syllogism that I posed to myself in high school was I'm interested in life and everything. What is life but biology? What is biology but chemistry? What is chemistry but physics? So I'll study physics. And it didn't take me more than about two or three months to discover that I was going to be an average physics student, but I adored literature. You weren't supposed to like freshman English but I loved 'Passage to India', and I honestly think I picked psychology because it halfway between physics and English.

Dr. Dave: I think that's true for me. I didn't realize that we had that in common. So it's interesting that we both ended up not only in psychology but also in being

interested in technology and psychology, since I was originally going to be an engineer.

Davis: I read that, and I think that's probably where the geek genes have gone. Yeah, I've often wondered what my life would have been like if Jobs and Wozniak had bought the Apple out in the fifties, you know, and I'd had a suitable toy for my inclination, because when I got my hands on an Apple 2 back in 1982, I think it was, I really thought I had died and gone to heaven. Here was a device that I could fiddle around with but it had the immensely satisfying characteristic that I could read stuff on it, you know. I could store information. I could use it to, in a sense, get inside my own head and personal computing and I have been close associates ever since.

Dr. Dave: Okay, now aside from psychology being sort of in the middle, was there anything else about psychology that initially intrigued you in those early days that helped to draw you into the field?

Davis: Well I was a very self-preoccupied kid. I was introverted and I had learned to get along with people. I had developed a kind of verbal wit, but I felt, I felt different from everybody else and I think that psychology has, for so many of my students, particularly the personality clinical end, where I specialized, was a way to be authorized to be interested in, you know, life. Now having said that, the University of Minnesota's program was still heavily influenced by B. F. Skinner, so part of my studies in psychology were much more like electrical engineering in a way, than what I wound up being interested in. But I had enough, I had enough interesting teachers and I could see, I think, enough resonances between novels which was really how I was trying to understand another life, that psychology seemed like it would at least get me part way there, and I, although I don't remember thinking about this very explicitly, there was probably some sense that you could make a living in psychology and that wasn't clear in English. I had said to one of my humanities teachers how thrilled I was with his course and he said, "Well that's good but these are not the ideas you make a living at. These are ideas that you eventually get over."

Dr. Dave: (laughs) Great. Oh boy. I didn't realize that that interest in literature and writing was also something we have in common because when you look at my bio I'm sure that you've seen that I ended up majoring in creative writing as an undergraduate and it was, I think, out of a similar sense of wanting to get into the brass tacks issues of what it's like to be of...what it's about to be human.

Davis: I think that's absolutely what it is and I, I still don't know if I really have the talent to be a creative writer but I've spent...a very very avid consumer and in fact, being at a liberal arts college has allowed me to have among my friends people who are like the teachers who inspired me as an undergrad, and as I sometimes say to my students, psychology has made very little progress beyond what the philosophers did hundreds of years ago with the mind/body problem. The only reason we have for, assume that anyone else has an inner life is that we

read novels in which we seem to be led into someone else's head and I still get a lot of my conviction about what the inner life of other human's is like from reading novels.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, me too. You know we've kind of jumped into this right in the middle, but maybe we should catch up readers a little bit on who you are. Give us a quick sketch, if you will, of your academic career.

Davis: Okay. I majored in psychology. Graduated in 1965 from the University of Minnesota. I spent a year in South India at Osmania University as an exchange student and I had minored in both anthropology and philosophy and the anthro part, after I got over a massive culture shock, I think stuck with me and I was quite interested after India in cultural psychology, as it's now called. I went to Michigan because it was a good psychology program but Susan Schaefer whom I was dating, and whom I married, went because it was a distinguished anthro department with a strong Middle East program. So in Michigan I concentrated in personality psychology as a Ph.D. subject and continued to hang out with anthropologists. We went to Morocco in 1970 and I was between working in a kind of dilatory way on a thesis and also doing some training work for Peace Corps, both from Morocco and India. I was overseas for most of the next two years, and then I was hired by Haverford College in 1972, tenured as a one year instructor, finished by dissertation in 1974 and I have been here ever since, I'm about to retire. At Haverford I teach personality psychology and courses that typically include a kind of a broad introduction to personality with some anthropology mixed in. An intermediate course with a lab on the psychology of adolescents and an occasional more advanced seminar usually on Freud.

Dr. Dave: Wow. When I think about your career as a psychologist there are three main areas that stand out to me. One is your long standing interest in Freud and then another is your involvement with technology and the third is, what you just mentioned, your work in Morocco, and I think I'd like to interview you again another time about Freud because I know you've got a lot to say on that topic. So let's talk, let's focus more on Morocco and also your involvement with technology there. How did you first get involved with Morocco, I think you just touched on that but maybe..

Davis: I did, and as I typically admit now to my students, it became apparent to me in the mid-sixties that if I was going to be interested in Susan Schaefer I had to be interested in Morocco because she went there in the Peace Corps, thinking at the time that she would go on in psychology and she decided very quickly that it had to be anthropology, it had to be specialized on women and she's worked on topics related to Muslim women, particularly in North Africa ever since. So I switched over and developed an interest in Morocco and it was a...my dissertation was in part an attempt to understand social memory in the context of the Moroccan sense, it's not a thesis that I remember very fondly frankly, but it did...Michigan was one of the few places, probably one of two at the time, academic institutions in the US where you could actually study Moroccan Arabic.

Each Arab country has its own dialect of Arabic, and Moroccan is as different from the language of the Koran as modern Italian is from Cicero's Latin. So I did a year of Moroccan Arabic. I got myself, in about six months of residence in the village that Susan had been in the Peace Corps, up to some standard of fluency and ever since I've been interested in Morocco as a place to try to understand the role of culture and personality. The largest impotence that interest was in the early 1980s. Susan and I were part of a Harvard University study of adolescence in seven different cultural groups, and we did the Moroccan part, and since then I've been teaching adolescents, I've been interested in adolescence as a topic, and I've been focused on things pertaining to adolescents and when we get to the technology, for the last ten years part of my fascination has been the reshaping of Moroccan youth experience and coming of age experiences, as a result of the introduction of new technologies over there.

Dr. Dave: Now I believe with Susan, who is now your wife, once Susan Schaefer now Susan Davis, I believe you've written at least one book about Morocco, is that the case? Or has there been more than one?

Davis: Sue, yeah. Susan has written two, one of which we co-authored. Her thesis research on Moroccan woman became a book called *Patience and Power: Women's Lives in a Moroccan Village*, that has been quite influential and the book that came out of the Harvard project was published in 1989 as *Adolescence in a Moroccan Town*, and that's co-authored by the two of us.

Dr. Dave: Well I can see that at some future interview I will probably going to have to interview you all about adolescence since you have expertise there that I didn't know about. Yeah. What have been some of the highlights of your involvement with Morocco?

Davis: The biggest thing David is that I really got to a point, after I got my Arabic up to speed, where I felt I had acquired a second hometown and a second extended family. I don't get back often to Ortonville, Minnesota where I spent most of my first 18 years of my life, but in a lot of ways I still think I'm a product of that Midwestern small town environment and Sidi Kacem, where we lived, is a kind of Midwest Morocco, and I really came to admire, particularly the older people, the parents of the adolescents we were studying in the early eighties for their...their groundedness in a culture that really worked and their strong values, their sense of humor and the more I got into Moroccan Arabic the more I felt I had actually opened up another...another wing in my own personality. It's different to move outside an Indo-European language and function in somebody else's language community, and as the years have gone by I've become more interested in the, I guess we'd have to call it the spiritual side of Morocco. Susan and I came here as, in my case, a lapsed Congregationalist and in her case a lapsed Catholic and we're now members of the Society of Friends, the Quakers. Quakers have this very open ended notion that there is that of God in every person, you don't really have to believe in any kind of ritual, in fact you don't have to believe in God in the way that most established religions talk about it.

But I think that even though I, for reasons I could explain, don't expect to ever be a Muslim, I'm very sympathetic to their spiritual approach to the world and by meeting them at this very unsophisticated level, almost all of the adults that I was closest to in my first years in Morocco were completely unschooled, utterly illiterate, and what they knew about life they knew really through an aural economy and a religious tradition, religious and cultural tradition.

Dr. Dave: You say that learning Moroccan Arabic opened up a new wing inside you, a new wing in your mind. Was that wing spirituality?

Davis: No, I think at first it was really just another vernacular. I came to appreciate that jokes are different in that culture. There's a style of social rapport. It has to do with religion in the following sense. Very few of us in English think about the fact that when we say hello on the telephone we are saying something that was originally "hallow". You know, as in "hallowed be thy name" or "thy day"....

Dr. Dave: Mmm hmm

Davis: ...and we don't think about the fact that we say goodbye that we're saying "God be with you." But in Morocco, or in any Arabic speaking Muslim country it's impossible to miss the religious connotation so that if I ask you "How are you?", you say "I'm fine, praise God" (*Hamdullah*). If I say "I'll see you tomorrow" and I forget to say "If God wishes" (*Inshallah*), you correct me, because you mustn't make any plans, you mustn't start anything without saying "In God's name" (*Bismillah*). You mustn't finish it without saying "Praise God" and you mustn't plan anything in the future without calling on God's favor. So religion is in the air in a way that is really inescapable, but I think a lot of it is I love to be in that language community. I love to be able to be fluent. I love to be talking to people that almost nobody in the world can talk to.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. (laughter)

Davis: You know, it's really a constant stimulation to me.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, well I'm thinking that your knowledge of Arabic might put you in a better position to understand some of the forces that are moving through the Islamic world today and a better position for most of us in the States, so I'm definitely interested in your reflections about Islam on the world scene today. And also, in relation to psychology I'm wondering if in your opinion, is there such a thing as an Islamic psychology that somehow differs from Western psychology?

Davis: I think that the short answer has to be no. In fact, I'm very resistant to the notion that there is an American psychology. I think Moroccans themselves differ immensely and Morocco is the very Western end of traditional Islam, a population that includes well over a billion people. Most of them don't even speak Arabic. Most Muslims actually live in South and East Asia. So I don't

think there is an Islamic psychology but having said that traditional Muslims, and this certainly classifies Morocco, which is well over 90% Muslim, and most people believe strongly in Islam even though they may not follow all of its tenets, particularly when they're young. I think they place religion a little closer to the center of their lives than probably the majority of American Christians do. Now, remember I'm saying that as an East Coast college professor and not as someone who has stayed out in the rural Mid-West. I think one of the tensions in the United States, one of the red-blue tensions is between people who are, although they may be nominally religious, are actually quite secular in their attitude toward life and people who are more centered on religious thinking and who want their social and political lives to be about religion. Islam offers a great many very detailed guides to how you ought to live your life but in my experience it offers them rather gently. They're things that you ought to do and if you don't do them God is forgiving and there's always hope that you'll fall into line later on. The Koran says that at the Day of Judgment "Whoever has done a mote's weight of good will see it, and whoever's done a mote's weight of evil will see it." What has happened to Islam however, and I think it's happened to Christianity too is it's been partially hijacked by fundamentalists. I heard a show recently on "Speaking of Faith" on public radio where the speaker called these people religious totalitarians. There are a lot of religious totalitarians now who claim to speak in the name of Islam. Most of my Moroccan Muslim friends are appalled at this. Their notion is that Islam is supposed to be highly individual and their quarrel with Christianity and with most other religions is that there's too much hierarchy, too many priests telling you what to do, but there certainly are now in mosques all over the Muslim world people who are telling people what to do and telling them there's only one way to interpret these verses and frequently the next statement is, and therefore you must go to battle against, you know, the Jews and the Christians.

Dr. Dave: Right, in fact, that it seemed to me that this fundamentalist divide is the major problem that's facing the world today and I'm not sure how one resolves that. Do you have any ideas about that?

Davis: Well I certainly agree with you. It is my major preoccupation and I have been reading a lot of Muslim writers. I've been reading the core texts of the fundamentalists, people like Sayid Qutb. I think that what has to happen is that the common folk have to, as Quakers say, speak truth to power. They have to say you're not going to do this in my name. Suicide is forbidden by Islam. Suicide bombing that kills innocent people, non-combatants is condemned by Islam and when somebody tells you otherwise you have to be willing to stand up and say "No, I won't do this". I'll give you an example and you can decide whether you want to keep it or edit it out but one of my old friends was in Morocco, now in his fifties, I've known since he was a teenager. He lives now in the south of France, he's married to a French woman, they have four little girls and we spent a weekend with them in the summer of '02 and I said to Driss, "You know, I'm really getting worried about religion. There's a lot of hatred being preached in the

name of religion” and he said “Tell me about it.” He said, “I went to mosque a couple of weeks ago and the preacher, the Iman, is quoting verses from the Koran that he says prove that the Jews and the Christians are sworn enemies and that we must be prepared to go to war with them. And Driss said “I’ve listened to this Doug until my blood boiled and I started to raise my hand, which nobody ever does in the mosque, and when he noticed me and paused I said “Be quiet! What are you saying? Who do you think you are? The Jews and Christians like us are ‘people of the book’ as the expression used in Islam. They’re part of the same religious tradition. We’re supposed to get along with them. You’re telling us to go to war with them? This is France! It’s an open society; they’re letting us live here. There’s racism and things we don’t like but we’ve got to learn to live together.”” And he said “When the service broke up I had people in my face shouting “You are Satan!” and I pointed to the preacher and said “No, he’s Satan! I’m just a poor Moroccan guy, living with a French woman, trying to make a living here in this society.” and I thought we need 300,000 Drisses There’s got to be somebody at every Friday prayer, just has there has to be somebody at every church in America who will stand up and say “No, this is not about...we are not the only people blessed by God. It is not our job to send other people to Hell. It’s our job of the get along together”

Dr. Dave: It seems to me that it took tremendous courage for him to speak up in that situation and I’m not sure that there’s that much of that sort of courage around. For some reason, the fundamentalists always seem to have...to take the high ground, they claim the moral high ground and then somehow people are intimidated to speak up.

Davis: I think you’re absolutely right and if we’re talking about Driss, he’s always been a loudmouth. He got in trouble in school. We used to sit in cafes in Morocco and I was thinking if the folks at the neighboring table are listening closely I’m going to be told that I should stay out of Moroccan politics, and you’re going to wind up in the slammer.

Dr. Dave: Well, this is really some interesting background because you’re painting a picture that we don’t hear much here in this country. We don’t hear about Islamic tolerance and taking a broad point of view.

Davis: No, you’re quite right and you know we’ve been going in and out of Morocco, and in Susan’s case now for 40 years, and in my case for over 35 and while it’s true now that most Moroccans think the United States has gone rather mad in it’s foreign policy, and they’re quite angry about some of the things we’ve done, it still isn’t personal. It’s still not, they’re still very willing to accept us as individuals. They’re fascinated that we’ve troubled to learn their language if they’re people we don’t know. Susan still travels all over Morocco by public transportation without feeling frightened at all and in fact we’re planning to, as I retire from teaching this year, we’re planning to make arrangements so that we can spend, I hope, several months a year in Morocco most years.

Dr. Dave: Well that's heartening to hear that they are able to separate the policies of our government from the people and somehow people around the world for a long time (laughs) have miraculously been able to do that and hopefully that's a quality that won't go away. Boy, I had banked so much on there being an Islamic psychology...

Davis: (laughter)

Dr. Dave: ...so I was...

Davis: Let me tell you what Islamic psychology is when it exists.

Dr Dave: Okay.

Davis: What the fundamentalists argue in Islam, is that, Islam to be a complete fulfilling of God's will for humans, must not just be merely a religion - something you do on Friday or something you do entirely at home, it must be an entire way of life. And so the tension in the Muslim world is over whether Islam must be much more assertive and try to claim control of the political system. So this writer I mentioned earlier, Sayid Qutb is a secularist and a fiction writer in his youth, he was Egyptian, got more and more conservative. Eventually he was executed by the Egyptian authorities. But he argued that the nominally Muslim governments of the Arab world, like Egypt, and even Saudi Arabia in his view, were in fact not true Muslim governments because they didn't govern entirely under the dictates of Islam and that point of view when you make it a political program is quite worrisome because the accusation that's made against the fundamentalists, and it was a major issue in the recent Algerian Civil War, is they will participate in the democratic progress only until they get themselves elected and then they'll shut down political discourse.

Dr. Dave: Mmm hmm

Davis: Now I...Morocco, as the place next door to Algeria, is a place that is enjoying more religious, I mean...I was going to say more political freedom, than it has before, more believable elections, more range of people in parliament but there is an Islamist movement in Morocco that would very much like to become much more conservative and rule the whole country under Muslim principles and then you get a lot of other restrictions. I just don't happen to think that that's Muslim in the deepest sense. I think it's something simply done in the name of Islam, just as you know when the Fascists took over countries in the last century, you know, they preached from the pulpit about how essential this was but I don't... I don't think that's the only way Islam can go. Morocco has in the past been very tolerant of its Jewish minority. There isn't much of it left but it was in fact a country where people came as refugees from the Christian Inquisition in Spain. They went largely to Turkey and to Morocco and, while life was not perfect, it was free of the kind of pogroms and mass murder that you periodically have in Europe. So I'm, until proven wrong, I'm going to continue to believe that that's a much a part of Islamic psychology as is the fundamentalist kind. It's a

palpable difference when you go to Morocco. In Saudi Arabia, a country where I've never been, but it's where women can't study together with men, can't drive cars. In Morocco, if I speak as I did in my internet project in the mid-nineties, if I speak to a good technical university, half the students are women and half of those women are dressed in very European clothing and the other half are wearing headscarves and more concealing clothing and two young women, one dressed conservatively, and one dressed almost provocatively, will walk out of the classroom chatting with each other and holding hands. They're best friends. That's what's appealing about Morocco, they don't see any contradiction between that and Islam but everywhere in the Muslim world there are people arguing this is not okay. We have to be...we have to be more conservative about our dress; we have to start protecting the sexes from the temptations that the other sex represents and so on. So there's a...there's a real struggling shaping up throughout the Muslim world.

Dr. Dave: Right. Now you mentioned a technological project that you were involved in in the nineties and I know you were... you've continued to be involved with technology. Maybe you can tell us a bit about the technology work that you've been doing there in Morocco.

Davis: Delighted to. I had a Fulbright grant in 1995-96 to study the social impact of the Internet in Morocco. There was no Internet feed into Morocco. You could do dial up at fabulous costs but there was no locally available Internet until the fall of 1995 and that was the period that I was there, and over a period of just a few years, Morocco became one of the fastest growing telecom communities in the world with cell phones, there already were satellite dishes, so modern media at...When Susan went to this rural town in 1965 there were radios but no television. By the 1970s there were beginning to be a few televisions and one black and white station. By the 1980s there were several stations in color TV. By the 1990s every little community including shanty towns even without electricity, people would buy car batteries to feed their television sets and they'd put up little satellite dishes. In the mid-nineties with Internet access it begins to be possible for people to get access to all of the resources of the Web. Where I completely missed the mark in my prediction, I thought that colleges and universities were going to be leaders in this technology and of course had I thought for a minute I would have realized that was impossible because none of them had the budget to buy computers and at first they couldn't put in high speed lines, so all they had was dial up. What happened instead is an explosion of cyber cafes, or *cyber* as they're called in Morocco. Morocco has, I think, 1500 eligible cyber cafes and the street on which a lot of the adolescents which we studied in the early 1980s, which at that time had no pavement, no running water, no sewer system, now it has all of those things and there's a cyber café right there within a block. So the little brothers and sisters of the people that we were studying 20 years ago are now able to, at a cost of as little as 50 cents an hour, go in and make up identities for themselves and chat on the internet, and flirt and download whatever it is they want to download and I think it is the most exciting thing going on in that part of

the world and it really is giving people access to fabulous amounts of information. There are no public libraries and even that are...that are really worthy of the name in most parts of Morocco, and university libraries have typically between one and two book holdings per enrolled student. The comparable figure where I teach is probably more like four or five hundred.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Davis: So the only way...I mean, obviously a computer is still expensive and the fact that so much information is in English is a disadvantage, but the only way people in the country like Morocco are going to get access to information is through the Net and now that we have a project like the Wikipedia which are, functions in Arabic as well as in French, as well as English, it really is possible for people to get access to a range of information. They can be reading...they can be reading Al Jazeera's website in Arabic and if they want to, Al-Haram from Cairo but they can also be reading the New York Times and the Manchester Guardian, and Le Monde and they can be reading Israeli newspapers.

Dr. Dave: This is going to certainly transform the world. Do you have any speculations about the impact of this sort of technological explosion in third world countries?

Davis: Well, the major interest I think that I have now for the last 10 years is, as a personality psychologist, how does it change one's personhood to be able to project oneself in a constructive virtual reality, which is a highfalutin way of saying if...if you have a weblog and you can represent yourself and talk about the things you care ideas about, whether it's your favorite rock group or your religious ideas or the struggle you're having with your parents, if you can go out online and play an interactive role playing game, where instead of being you know a weak little kid in a small town you can be a powerful wizard who does battle with other powerful forces, if you can go into a chat room and pretend to be a highly educated engineer and see if you can hustle some French girl into having a flirtatious conversation with you, all sorts of possibilities exist that didn't exist before and I've been studying all of this. Most of my work in the last few years has been about the transforming effects of Internet access and it's something I expect to do a lot more of when I get back to Morocco. Just watching kids in cyber cafes and collecting data on how many screen names they have. Susan stopped in to see a friend of ours in the late nineties who was running one of the big cyber cafes in Rabat, and she said "Douglas was interested in how kids are using the technology" and Mekki laughed and he said "Well, not so long ago all twenty of my computers were in use and I can watch what people are doing on their screen." He said "I try not to abuse the privilege." There were probably, he said, with twenty computers there were probably more like 35 people because a lot of them had two or three people using them. He said "I don't think there was a kid in the room who was correctly representing their age, their sex and their personal appearance." They were making it up as they went along.

Dr. Dave: (laughs) How intriguing!

Davis: And I have done research here, my students have done thesis projects in recent years on massively multiplayer role playing games like EverQuest and Star Wars Galaxies and more recently these persistent worlds, these kind of virtual shopping malls like Second Life. They afford amazing possibilities for creating an identity that's more as you wish it would be. My student, Nick Yee, who's now at a grad school at Stanford, interviewed people about their EverQuest experiences and it was as if you had dropped into Tolkien's world and you had actually been able to interview Merri and Pippen, you know, and they'd say "Well, we lost Gandolf in the Mines of Moria and then I don't know, Boromir started to act really strange and Frodo wandered off and..." But they were describing something that had actually happened to them the day before, that they'd really been a part of. Now, Morocco has been slow to get to this last technology because they haven't had broadband but you can now get DSL in almost every telephone exchange in Morocco, so more and more it's going to be possible for people to actually go out and partake of a world that is shaped by fantasy and not by their own impoverished circumstances cause we're talking about a country that has one tenth the per capita income of the United States.

Dr. Dave: I'm wondering if international friendships are being forged through these role-playing games.

Davis: Oh they certainly are, particularly romantic friendships. I met an English professor in Fez a few years ago and he ran a cyber café as a side business and I visited it. There were college aged people sitting around chatting and I said "I'm very interested in people meeting each other and knowing what happens" and he smiled and said "We have at least four marriages that came out of this room and they were all Moroccan young woman who linked up with more wealthy men from the Middle East. If we were talking to boys, they're trying to find somebody in the West, some place who might like to have a Moroccan pen pal and then maybe you'd like to come and visit me in Morocco and maybe with a little luck, who knows? Maybe I'll come and become part of your society."

Dr. Dave: Wow. Well, Doug you are an amazing font of information from when I knew you so many years ago as a graduate student at the University of Michigan and that hasn't changed. It's only compounded itself and I can see I'm going to have to make you a regular guest on this show.

Davis: Well, David I would be pleased and for my part I've found you a fascinating conversationalist long ago in the sixties right, an era that our students can only imagine,

Dr. Dave: Oh, am I?

Davis: And you still are, so let's hope that this is just the first of many conversations.

Dr. Dave: Okay but you don't get off quite this...quite this easily cause I'd like to bring people down to something very personal if I can...

Davis: Sure.

Dr. Dave: ...and I know that there are points of personal crisis that come into each of our lives and I'm always interested in the applicability of psychology. Is there a personal crisis that you'd be willing to speak about that you can recall in which your knowledge of psychology somehow helped to pull you through?

Davis: Well, since you were kind enough to give me an idea of what you were going to talk about I gave this a little thought and I think I have a very personal but it's an unusual experience because I didn't have the psychology when I had the crisis. I'm an only child, of older parents and when I was 14 years old my mother died of acute leukemia and it was a devastating crisis that I had of course not a clue that even such a thing could happen and I think for years I basically held it inside. I don't think I talked to friends in college years later about it much but as I began to study personality psychology, and I think it's probably linked up with why I became so interested in the personal psychology that Freud enables at the end of the nineteenth century, I think that that attempt to understand my own story is a major part of what led me into the kind of psychology that I do.

Dr. Dave: Mm hmm

Davis: And I think my teaching, even though I teach personality and when students have problems they go to a counseling service where there are real clinical psychologists, I think my sense of what life is like for them was shaped in part by my own attempt to deal with the emotions about my mother's death and then my sense of what it would be like for my students to go through the kinds of crises that are really extremely common; you know, having marriages break up around them, having to deal with illness, having you know, having lost a loved one and so on. I've been very lucky as an adult. I've had good health and the two members of my immediate family, my wife and daughter had good health. Things have worked out, although tenure was a little dicey, things have worked out very well professionally.

Dr. Dave: For many years you were chair of the psychology department at Haverford and from your long perspective as a teacher and chair, you know we might have some psychology students listening to this and as a matter of fact, I know that we do. What advice do you have for aspiring psychology students today?

Davis: Well, I first have to say by way of truth in advertising...

Dr. Dave: (laughs)

Davis: ...at a place as small as Haverford (laughs) with only four or five people in the psych department, everybody has to be chair when they get tenure, so yeah I've done it a number of times. But we...we spread the duties out fairly broadly

and all of us do a lot of advising of students and we probably send two-thirds of our students eventually, or not so much send them, but they find their way into one or another kind of helping profession. I typically argue, that particularly if you're interested in the human contact part of psychology, you should regard life as long and not hurry into graduate school. There may be a case to be made that if you're going to solve Fermat's Last Theorem you have to do it before you're 25 when those neurons start to slow down but good clinicians I think acquire their skills over many many decades and I think good teachers do too. So it's been my feeling that psychology is only one of many disciplines in a good liberal arts college where you sort of imprint on strong teachers and if you decided you want to be one, you need to take your good education out into the world and do some other things for a while and I think the best graduate schools are cognitive to the fact that they have better success with people who have had a few years of life experience than people who've never been anything but students. One of the reasons I went to India in 1965 was that I really couldn't imagine jumping right into grad school. I really needed to be somewhere else and after I'd gone as far away as I could possibly be I was at least a little less unready to go into graduate school. I might well have taken several more years off and benefited by it.

Dr. Dave: I know that you've always been a voracious reader so to wrap things up here; is there anything that you've read recently or that you're reading right now that you'd strongly recommend to this audience?

Davis: Yeah, my reading habits are fairly divergent. I'm reading a book by Mark LeVine, who's a Middle East specialist but he's also a heavy metal musician and it's titled 'Why They Don't Hate Us – Lifting The Veil On The Axis of Evil' and it's a very good read of what's going on in the Arab street, all the way from Morocco to Damascus and he develops a concept he calls Culture Jamming to talk about the way music as a metaphor gets reshaped in different societies. I heard him talk to an audience at Swarthmore and he was great. I'm also reading now a book by David Maraniss, the first of his I've read, although he's had several other successful books. It's called 'They Marched Into Sunlight' and he does, based on interviews, he reconstructs two events that happened in October 1967, when you and I were in graduate school. One is a... is a terrible ambush of an American elite brigade in south Vietnam and how it affected all of those people and the other is a violent confrontation between student demonstrators at the University of Wisconsin and Dow Chemical recruiters and he segways back and forth then tries to draw us back into the sixties in terms of the actual experience of those people. Both those were destined not to survive, in the case of Vietnam, and those who have survived and what they've done with those experiences since then. I'd recommend both of those books.

Dr. Dave: They both sound like terrific recommendations. I want to take a look at them myself. Okay, well we have run long so unfortunately I need to close this off but I want to thank you for a wonderful interview and as I said before I really want to bring you back.

Davis: Good, it's been a delight David. Thanks for thinking of me.