

# Dr. Elaine Walker: 2010 Zubin Award Winner and SRP Founding Member

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Dr. Elaine Walker of Emory University, a former president and founding member of SRP, described her current collaboration on the North American Prodromal Longitudinal Study (NAPLS), where Emory represents one of eight research sites. She described the consortium as a research endeavor to further understand the prodrome of schizophrenia by combining data in a retrospective evaluation. Dr. Walker explained that her own research has expanded from focusing on behavior and symptoms of the prodrome to cognition, genetics, gene expression, hormones, electrophysiology, and brain structure.

Dr. Walker's interest in schizophrenia began while she worked at a psychiatric hospital, as she found "the patients with psychosis the most fascinating." While in graduate school, her academic interest in schizophrenia research increased and continued with her post-doctoral position working with Dr. Sarnoff Mednick. When asked to reflect on her career thus far, Dr. Walker said "I thought it [research] would be good, and it's great," adding "the best thing is to have a job where you get paid to do something you love." Elaine also enjoys working with students through collaboration and professional development. Elaine's ability to support students has been beneficial to SRP, as many of her past students have made significant contributions to the conference. She provided a glimpse of her tutelage for current graduate students, "Don't procrastinate, because

the sooner you complete the tasks you need to complete, the sooner you will get to experience the rewards."

With respect to changes in SRP, Dr. Walker reported feeling that SRP's "focus and style [have remained] the same," with the main change being that the conference "has gotten larger." She enjoys "hearing new research findings and seeing colleagues" every year and offered, "SRP has turned out to be all that I hoped it would be as a nurturing and stimulating intellectual event for students and researchers."

Before running off to see colleagues she reunites with annually at SRP, I asked Dr. Walker what profession she would have if she had not enter into clinical psychology. She paused for a minute before replying, "Sometimes I think maybe I would have gone into biology or anthropology, or physics." While there is no doubt she would have been equally prominent in those fields, utilizing her tremendous talent and skills, SRP and the broader clinical science communities are indeed very happy that she found her calling in schizophrenia research. All those who have spent any time with her (from a 15 minute interview to years of research collaboration) know just how exceptional Dr. Walker is as researcher, advisor, and person.



# Dr. Jill Hooley, 2009 SRP President

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Jill Hooley earned her D.Phil. at Magdalen College at Oxford University. Being that her program selected one student per year, she entered graduate school a cohort of one. In a research-intensive program, void of course requirements, Dr. Hooley was given the rare opportunity to focus solely on developing her research identity. Although this was an exciting opportunity for exploration, the endless opportunities and freedom could often times feel overwhelming, a feeling familiar to many graduate students. She partially attributes her ability to manage in this challenging environment to the support of her peers, including current members of SRP.

Driven to answer questions such as, why do people experience mental health relapse and what role does social environment and the family play in this process, Dr. Hooley developed an interest in the work of Julian Leff and George Brown, early researchers in these areas. Fortunately, Dr. Hooley's advisor, Dr. John Teasdale, agreed that this line of research formed a fruitful field for study. In the years since, Dr. Hooley developed a prolific program of research in Expressed Emotion, publishing numerous key papers, many of which address questions of the family's role in relapse and relapse prevention.

Recently, Dr. Hooley's interests have taken a slightly different path, illustrated in her eloquent presidential address in 2009 focused on pain and pain tolerance in people who self-harm. Her foray into pain research began while preparing for a course seminar on schizophrenia. Dr. Robert Dworkin's work on pain insensitivity in schizophrenia quickly drew her attention. This spark of interest later combined with that of a senior honors student who proposed self-harm as a topic for her honors thesis. Outcomes of this study challenge our understanding of pain threshold and tolerance, especially in individuals with self-harming behaviors.

When asked to reflect upon her graduate student days and offer advice to current students, Dr. Hooley quickly responded, "As graduate students, you need to

become resilient and resourceful." As an advisor, she considers one of her most important roles to guide students to design studies that are both feasible and related to their interests. She suggested that graduate students consider guidance and criticism as tools to help them grow as researchers without taking feedback too personally. Dr. Hooley also provided suggestions for students who want to enter the field; she urged young scholars to be flexible about what they work on and to participate in as many research projects as possible. She also recommended that students ask "why" when interpreting interesting findings in order to form a progressively more informed database.

Dr. Hooley would like to see SRP become a place where students come to "present their best work." We discussed the open and welcoming atmosphere of the conference, describing our encounters with many senior scholars who seem genuinely interested in student research. Dr. Hooley named increased opportunities for student and associate members as central accomplishments of her presidency. A new Student and Education committee will give students a forum to make suggestions, making SRP meetings even more welcoming and useful for younger attendees. A new early career award will provide recognition and support for junior faculty members who have made a productive transition from student to scholar. In addition, she has made an effort to promote continuity with the society's history. A new annual address named in honor of a recently deceased SRP member will help remind meeting attendees of the significant contributions made by long-time society members.

For us as students, Dr. Hooley's story of successful transformation from graduate student to a leader in the field provides a sense of hope and a real world example of how a passion for answering clinically important questions can have bountiful rewards. In addition, support from members of organizations like SRP makes dreams of careers in academic research seem more attainable. It is experiences like these that provide the "spark" necessary to motivate students early in their research careers.

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