

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Sheldon Jacobson, PhD

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Education is Key - Civics Education Oral History project

Interview # ECE-A-L-2021-018

Dr. Sheldon Jacobson, director of UIUC's Institute for Computational Redistricting as well as the Bedtime Research Institute, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Education is Key – Civics Education* Oral History project.

Interview Date & Location:

Date: Jun 2, 2021 Location: Telephonic interview

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript being
processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:00 / 1.0 hr.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on July 21, 202.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Sheldon Jacobson, *Education is Key - Civics*, ECE-A-L-2021-018

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Dr. Sheldon Jacobson was born in 1960 and grew up in Montreal, Canada. He attended Sir Winston Churchill High School, graduating in 1975. Sheldon continued his education at McGill University (Montreal), earning a BA, MA, and finally a Ph.D. there in 1988. His work experiences include teaching at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, and Virginia Tech before coming to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. While at UIUC, Sheldon served in the Engineering-Computer Science Department. Sheldon is the founding director of the Institute for Computational Redistricting and the Director of the Bedtime Research Institute. He has been involved with the creation and the update of the website “Election Analytics,” and has produced many publications tied to redistricting, March Madness- Bracketology, and national election analysis.

Dr. Jacobson explores the use of algorithms in looking at the redistricting of state and congressional districts. The researcher looks at the issue of gerrymandering and its negative impact on creating non-competitive and uncontested races. In Illinois, the 2010 re-map led to thirteen of eighteen Congressional races being decided by more than 20 percent, most more than 40 percent. In 118 State House races, fifty-two were uncontested while half of the twenty-two State Senate races were also uncontested. Jacobson also talked about the use of ‘Cracking and Packing’ as part of gerrymandered maps and its negative impact on democracy. He discussed the splitting of community interests and compactness questions. He reviewed the use of polling data and election analytics used to predict presidential and US senate races. Other topics discussed included teaching during a pandemic, using algorithms in sports, and the importance of being fluent in data literacy.

Subject Headings/Key Words: redistricting; use of computer algorithms for redistricting; ‘cracking and packing’ in gerrymandering; Illinois Congressional races and redistricting; IL State House races and redistricting; use of polling data to predict presidential and US Senate races; teaching during the pandemic; role of civics education in data literacy;

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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