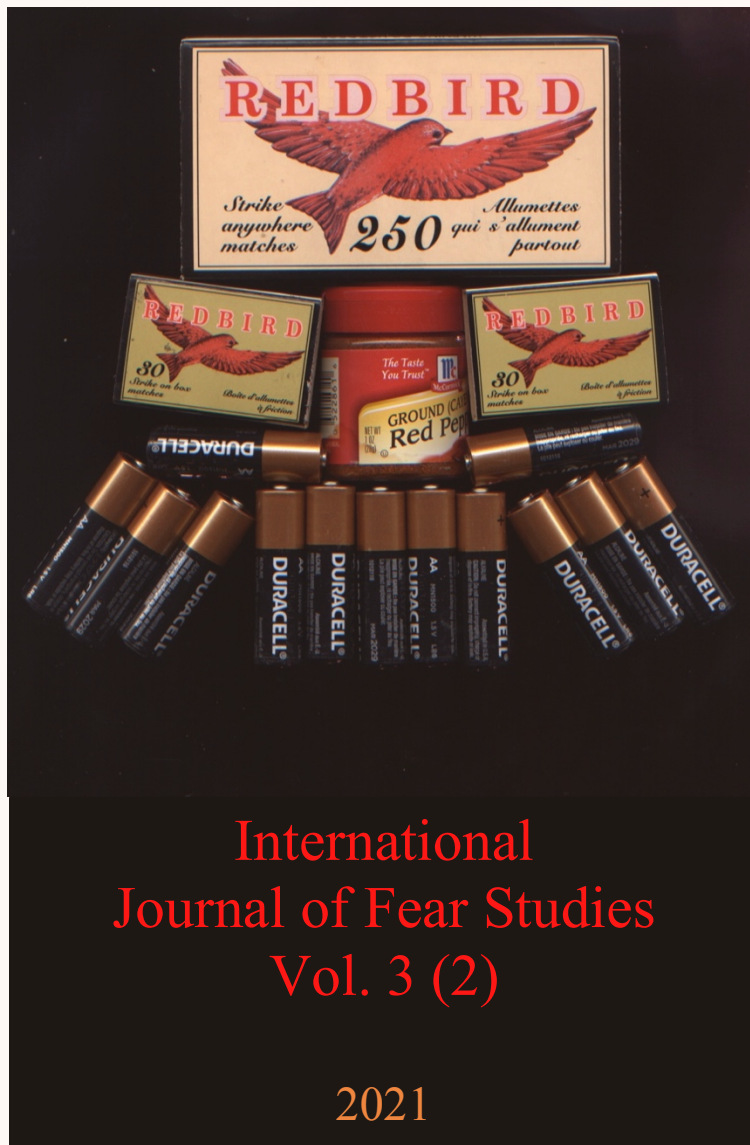


*Interdisciplinary & Transdisciplinary Approaches*



**International  
Journal of Fear Studies  
Vol. 3 (2)**

**2021**

Published by the In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute  
& The Fearology Institute ©2021



## (Senior) Editorial: *Think Community*

- **R. Michael Fisher**

Canada

WITH this sixth issue of *IJFS*, I'm proud to attest to all that has transpired over three years of imagining a Fear Studies journal on an international scale. I have witnessed growth in the linkages of peoples involved in this venture. It was not that many years prior to the journal that I was becoming a bit cynical if I could gather enthusiasm from enough people to contribute and support this journal idea. Studying fear, from an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach is a rare thing.

You may note that there is also confusion about what “an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach” actually means, even though it seems clear when it is stated in the mission of the journal and in the sub-heading on the cover of each *IJFS* issue. What I have noticed in three years of the journal's life is that most contributors believe, or assume, that the journal is itself interdisciplinary and will publish just about anything on fear, from any discipline. That open receptivity of the journal is partly true. I do encourage, as Senior Editor and founder, that the journal ought to include a wide variety of works, research methodologies and approaches, and as long as fear is more or less central in the work, then it ought to be given serious attention for this journal. However, such a conceptualization of the meaning of “interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach” is misconstruing of the original meaning I had intended. The *IJFS* was always meant to publish authors who are working in an interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary way themselves in their relationship with fear (studies). Again, the journal is open to all disciplines and non-disciplines for having input into the nature and role of fear. Yet, the journal was never meant to be just a bunch of pieces, fragments, of published works from various disciplines where authors are coming out of and prefer.

This distinction I am making is challenging and frustrating at times to communicate to people. The journal wants mostly to publish actual interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary works themselves when they are submitted. The journal would then be a showcase of such complex inter- and trans-disciplinary works. It is, in other words, the aim is not to have the journal itself collect disciplinary works and bring wide varieties of them together—because then that is a ‘heap’ of articles, not an actual inter- and trans- disciplinary showcase. I know this is relatively hard for most people to get their heads around. I guess, in years ahead, the editors and reviewers of articles may get more fussy about this distinction and meeting the aims of the journal. Practical limitation are also real beyond the journals ideal aim. Usually, there are not enough submissions of truly interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary approaches themselves. The author's submitting don't even seem to think about the nature of their pieces in that context when coming into the Fear Studies community of scholars and artists that show up in the journal. It is my job as Senior Editor, to keep reminding the community of those making submissions to remember what it is that the journal is ideally aiming for. That said, I still embrace the fact that anyone wants to submit to the journal and so I tend to give everything (mostly) a fair reading and chance. This soft-spot on my part is also because I

want to give new scholars and new creative people a chance to publish. I wouldn't have put all my time and effort into this journal now for three years, if this latter attitude wasn't prevalent in my heart. That said, my tendency is not always therefore conducive to creating the top-notch show case journal I envisioned of publishing works that are themselves inter- and trans-disciplinary complex quality works on fear (and 'fear').

Remember that fear ('fear') in Fear Studies ('Fear' Studies), has always been conceived by me as unique to the publishing world since 1989, but especially with my publishing in 2006 a breakthrough curriculum theory article called "Invoking 'Fear' Studies" [1] and its updated version twelve years later [2]. Being unique is not the goal *per se*, but it is important IF myself, along with others, really want to push the envelope, to stretch the boundaries, and to create a virtual (r)evolution of thought and imagination (a genuine transdisciplinarity) around the topic of "Fear" (by any other name). Sadly, my wish is not always reality. The numbers are so rare who care about this kind of goal. Since 1989, very few people care that much about what is possible nor do they often understand my vision for this (r)evolution. If they read my work, they 'cherry pick' bits and leave out way too much, for my liking.

*"People need high quality creative and risky-information  
about fear ('fear')..."*

Yet, the few that do catch on to what is 'up' in this new field of fear studies (Fear Studies and/or 'Fear' Studies), they simply don't have the time and energies often in their daily lives to produce the quality works that are ideal. Most of them, I know are busy with working blue-collar daily lives and filled with family responsibilities. They think lots, research less so, and try to publish on the side—as amateurs, of which is highly valuable. Yet, I'm glad to say, very recently some new fear scholars in academia are somewhat taking up the charge (see below). But the long-running advocates I am speaking of here, whom I often call "fearists" (as would Desh Subba); so to be clear, they are not full-time paid professors or consultant researchers specializing in the leading-edge inquiries into the topic of fear. No, they don't get paid to research and write on fear. The *IJFS* was not conceived in that kind of privileged upper middle-class atmosphere of professionalism and academic specificity. Most scholarly journals are products of paid researchers working in universities and/or who have formed professional associations, and they then move to create a journal to reflect their group interests and its activities. They usually have good numbers of such members that can sustain the energy of production of a quality journal. *IJFS* is not of that type nor starting ground. It is grassroots, and very small and part-time (mostly amateurs). So, we all do our best we can. I merely am recognizing our distinctness here, it is not a complaint, but it is a reality, and a limitation nonetheless.

How might this amateur field of researchers, artists, writers, come to create a more powerful force, even a (r)evolution in the thought about fear ('fear')? This is not something I ever stop thinking about. I hope you all will do the same, some day. That's the only way we'll grow as an inter- and trans-disciplinary community of fear studiers. Which brings me to say, "Think Community" next time you read *IJFS*. "Think Community" next time you submit a piece to the journal, and/or "Think community" next time you don't submit to an issue of the journal and you just faded away into the busy-ness of your lives. To "Think Community" of course requires an upgrade of our typical

tendency of “individualism” that is so promoted in scholarly circles and just about every other competitive aspects of societies these days, at least in the modern world. The alienation and isolation of people is a dis-ease of massive scale. I see many write about fear and then ‘get their credits’ for their career advancement or self-centered goals, I see rarely anyone who wants to advance the “community” of fear researchers and artists as a whole. Thinking in/with/for the “whole” of *IJFS*, for example, is what would really make a difference in the future. That’s what I want to talk about with people. That’s what I want us to reflect upon in the next year, and to write articles and to communicate with each other about. How to spread this phenomenon that *IJFS* is symbolic of manifesting—a (r)evolution of thought in the study of fear (‘fear’). As Senior Editor, I’ll ensure these communiques between us, at least part of them, get published in the journal in a section on such Communiques amongst ourselves. This is important information, knowing, and knowledge to expanding what we do in our studies of fear (‘fear’). I have found most all people writing in the *IJFS* tend to avoid such personal communiques and subjective reports and explorations. It’s really too bad. An attitude of experimentalism, has to be both objective-subjective, and ought to be ‘fearless’ in expressing even the wildest of ideas, feelings, and strange imaginings. We have to take risks in this field of Fear Studies, or if we don’t, I’m pretty sure the worst of fear’s toxicity will slide-in and take-over this world. People need high quality creative and risky-information about fear (‘fear’)—and that’s what our community of researchers, philosophers, writers, etc. can offer to the world, and offer to each of us in this community.

I would like you to consider changing that comfortable default pattern and “Think Community.” We have many roles to play in the future now, and with fear (‘fear’) growing so rapidly and insidiously, there has to be mobilization of counter-forces and knowledge and wisdom, and support and nourishment, to build –a (r)evolution to challenge the dis-ease we all feel and see is tearing the world apart so rapidly. Let’s talk! We need to have ideas flow. So, Barbara Bickel, who has edited books and an academic journal for years, offered some concrete suggestions for building this learning community of Fear Studies:

- (a) authors who submit to the *IJFS* ought to read one or more issues of *IJFS* as part of the researching and writing of their submission, and to cite articles when appropriate,
- (b) a social media volunteer could help create a blog and/or podcast set of discussions around a chosen article from an issue of *IJFS*, where those interested all read the article and comment and have a live podcast, etc.,
- (c) expand the uptake of the journal by posting on Fb, Twitter, etc. so to let more people know when an issue of *IJFS* comes out and provide them with a link,
- (d) some volunteer(s) organize a Fear Studies Conference or Seminar now and then

**IN THIS ISSUE-** I am delighted to have had the opportunity to read creative and meaningful poetry, and then especially to read intense articles and see what people are doing with “fear.” The opening article by Dr. Kizel is one that ought to bring all readers into an engagement with what is happening in public education on mass scale. He is not the first person to talk about these problems of how adults treat children by “force” and collective socialization processes (like schooling) but Kizel is contrasting interesting ideas worth noting fit for our times. I’m so glad he has pursued this topic for many years and seems absolutely dedicated to do so as his entire career track in academia, as well as his profound interest and leadership in brining children and philosophy together—acting

as a counter-hegemonic force against oppression which is glued together by excessive fear and lack of teaching about fearlessness. He calls out for a new truly progressive Fear Education philosophy, a grand project close to my heart and some other readers of *IJFS*. Then, Desh Subba, founder of the philosophy of fearism (and a leading international fearist), expands his thought and critique especially onto Marxism and includes his own alternative view of political anthropology and history from a fearism lens. And his article gives good insights and a taste of what is in his newest big book (in press) on what he labels *Transphilosophism*.

*“...it will be important to access the spirit of fearlessness that comes with the emergence of fear in its varied forms.”*

Next, Dr. Ashwani Kumar, a Canadian educator, joins up with yours truly, as we explore the nature and role of fear and other topics in a meditative inquiry and dialogue process, of which this published piece is one of a two-part series, the other piece to be published in the next issue of *IJFS*. Out of Nepal, Dr. Pokhrel takes on her first serious literary analytical writing by examining fear in a novel (by a contemporary novelist)—from a diverse lens; and in particular, a novel about climate change and the psychosocial impacts that accompany it. These kinds of topics together are appropriate, claims Pokhrel, to what conditions of extremes we all are going to be facing in the near future, if not the present, where it will be important to access the spirit of fearlessness that comes with the emergence of fear in its varied forms—and, in the novel presented on, the form of dread is examined.

Simon Estok’s internationalist essay engages more deep reflections on the Covid-19 pandemic, as a follow-up and echo from the special issue “Covid-19” of *IJFS* 2(2). Fear is enmeshed in everything we’re learning about a contemporary global pandemic. Estok provides unique insights into his own life as he’s travelled during this time from Canada to S. Korea as part of his professorial work and personal life. He challenges us to think of fear and even the ecophobics of our day as potentially not merely a problem or pathology but as something essential under certain extreme contexts. Estok refers to ecophobia in his article as “ecofear gone bad.” I suggest readers check out the array of articles on ecofear in the theme issue of *IJFS* 3(1). The next co-written article by Sijin Yan et al., explores in a systematic way the need to conceive and implement a new kind of *fear education* and *moral education* that counters or at least problematizes the traditional W. philosophical traditions of engaging fear discourses—particularly, within the field of Education. I appreciate their intelligent working the nuances of fear dynamics *via* a Levinasian ethical philosophy (and implicit theology) and offering some unique ideas that ought to concern everyone who takes fear seriously as a powerful shaper of our past and current world.

As I sit back nearing age 70, under the tree of life, contemplating, a very basic notion arises that is everything that has motivated my life-course since late 1989, it is very simply:



The author/editor with an ‘old growth elder’—a Douglas Fir tree. Nanaimo, BC, Canada. Photo by Barbara Bickel ©2021

The essence of my passion for founding the *IJFS* is to improve *fear management/education* on this planet—a project long overdue. With our species’ long omission, literally, Fear (in all its forms known and unknown) is *now ruling* this thing we abstractly rely on and call “humanity.” The social-ethical fabric of ‘the world’ is under great pressures and cracking, including the ecological fabric. Who doesn’t feel this today? The Covid-19 pandemic is exacerbating and revealing hidden layers of *fear-based* patterning that so easily motivates generic ‘divide and conquer’ social practices. Yet, true enough, all “fear” is not bad, or negative. There is a resurgence, as indicated in this journal issue, for finding the positive in fear. Many dedicated folks, from various disciplines are really pushing to correct the long tendency (especially in W. philosophical and theological traditions) to associate fear with only the negative (be it as a passion, an emotion, a feeling).

In this current issue of *IJFS*, I am amazed at the timing of bringing together what truly is an exciting breed of new *fear educators*, albeit, they may call themselves x, y, z...but I see them as new fear educators, and they include herein, Desh Subba (the fearist) and myself (the fearologist)—and Kizel, and A. Kumar—with their strong critique of the hegemonic “pedagogy of fear” as oppression—and we all seem in a particular camp of philosophy. While another important group of young scholars, new fear educators, undauntingly are promoting this fearwork agenda too but from a slight different camp philosophically. The latter, really pushing to find the positive in fear (while not totally naive of the negative side), for example: Estok, Pokhrel, Yan, Scaramuzzo, Slattery.

I feel today there’s a turning point in Fear Education discourses. Sure, I am always skeptical of *fear-positivism* (positivity culture) in controlling current discourses on fear management/education [3]. Nonetheless, I welcome new voices. There’s an emerging bloom of interest by professional/academic educators to reconsider, re-vision, and implement intelligent ways to teach about Fear and to see that fear (‘fear’) is not merely individual and psychological, not merely an



emotion or passion, not merely a neuro-brain-circuitry, but there is something more to it—something more to our understanding the *ecology of fear* (and ourselves as a species). Yes, in the end, a big paradigm shift of all this new fear education is, at least with some fear writers, a tipping towards new methodologies and relational (holistic-integral) ontologies, by which some of us wish to declare that primarily “fear is social,” as I have declared recently [3]. That’s a political act. It’s a radical democratic action to *em-place fear* back to a centrality, to where it belongs—on the table of all sociopolitical discourse and leadership in societies. If the field of Education takes leadership in this uplifting of “fear” from the shadows, from being avoided, to being up-front and essential in our ethical, public and professional discourses—wow, that would be fantastic and an optimistic move towards a truly useful general public “education” in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I encourage readers to write responses to all authors in this *IJFS* issue, and to send any of them to me as well for possible publication in the next issue of *IJFS* 4 (1). Big thanks to all the artists who sent material to make this journal more beautiful.

#### Endnotes

1. Fisher, R. M. (2006). Invoking ‘Fear’ Studies. *The Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 22(4), 39-71.
2. Fisher, R. M. (2018). ‘Fear’ Studies, 12 years later: Progress and barriers. Technical Paper No. 74. In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.
3. Fisher, R. M. (2019). How the “culture of positivity” debilitates Fear Studies. Technical Paper No. 81. In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

\*\*\*\*

*“Most of us are afraid of meditative thinking or deep discontent, for it has the capacity to disturb false values, securities and comforts, and certainty in relationships and possessions. Instead of being afraid of discontent and canalizing it into a certain direction to avoid it, Krishnamurti (1964, 39) suggests to students that they ‘give it [discontent] nourishment until the spark becomes a flame and you are everlastingly discontented with everything...so that you really begin to think, to discover.”*

- **Ashwani Kumar** (in *Curriculum as Meditative Inquiry*, 2013, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 108)

\*\*\*\*