

RESEARCH FELLOW – CLARK, DAV: 2012 MLSRI APPLICATION

In 1996, I took the best yoga class I've ever taken. Of course, at the time I had no idea it was out of the ordinary! Subsequently, I went on to study a variety of somatic practices, ultimately completing a four-year Feldenkrais teacher training in 2008. Since then, I've maintained a small teaching practice, working continually to improve my practice, and the practice of other practitioners and dancers. This year, I've assisted with planning the national Feldenkrais conference, and I'm tickled to see that my top pick for our neuroscience symposium, Cathy Kerr, is also on the faculty for the Summer Institute this year. In addition to assisting with planning the conference, I've been invited to give one of the "translational" workshops that provides an experiential lens on a lecture about evolutionary neuroscience. I am deeply honored, and very much humbled by this opportunity to work with such talented and dedicated somatic educators (including my current favorite meditation teacher).

In 1996, I simultaneously started working for a computational linguistics lab at the University of Maryland. Since this time, my passion for cognitive science has never wavered. While my career has taken a somewhat circuitous path, I have always believed that an information processing approach to understand the human mind is the way to go, and so I developed an extensive skillset in cognitive neuroscience at MIT, Mass General Hospital and NYU. It should come as no surprise, then, that when I applied to UC Berkeley in 2006, it was because I felt an information processing approach to understanding somatic education was also the way to go. To me, the fundamental question is, "how might we teach people when they're convinced that they already know?" In pursuing this question, I've actually come to focus on the question of climate change education for my PhD thesis. For me, this is simply another way to ask that same question.

In my postdoc, I intend to return to the study of somatic education and embodied practice. The contemplation of this intent is yet another deeply humbling experience. But, there is also joy and excitement at the prospects—somatically grounded practice has the capacity to be a profoundly transformative force in our society. I am looking for guidance, and I believe I would find it at the mind and life summer research institute. I thank you for your consideration.