ISDN INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY

DATE: WEDNESDAY 8TH MARCH 2023

GUEST: DR JACKIE BELL – MATHEMATICIAN, PHYSICIST, STEM AMBASSADOR, ASPIRING ASTRONAUT AND CONTESTANT ON BBC2'S 'ASTRONAUTS: DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?'

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BIOGRAPHY:

Jackie is an award-winning Senior Teaching Fellow in the Department of Computing, Imperial College London, with a focus on Equality, Diversity, Outreach and Public Engagement.

Jackie was the first in her family to go to university and is now a proud alumna and honorary fellow of the University of Liverpool, graduating with a PhD in theoretical particle physics, MSc in Mathematical Sciences and BSc with Honours in Mathematics.

As a STEM Ambassador and champion for women and diversity within the sciences, Jackie has a keen interest in all STEM (Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects as well as a huge passion for communicating science and inspiring more young people to get into the sciences.

Jaclyn has also project managed national STEM programmes in partnership with the UK Space Agency and Science and Technology Facilities Council whilst a project manager at the UK Association for Science and Discovery Centres (ASDC).

Much of what Jackie has done has been spurred by her childhood dreams of going into space – a desire which has never left her. In 2017 Jackie was one of 12 candidates to be selected from over 3,000 applicants to take part in BBC2's 'Astronauts: Do You Have What It Takes?' where she underwent a series of tests, similar, or identical to those within the astronaut training programme.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Research conducted with 2000 14-19 Year Olds by Opinium between 21st February and 28th February 2023

Dr Jackie Bell @sciencesummedup
#IWD2023 #ScarsAbove

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MIND THE GENDER GAP: CAN VIDEO GAMES INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION OF FEMALE STEM GRADUATES?

- **ONLY A THIRD OF FEMALE STUDENTS ARE INTERESTED IN A STEM CAREER**
- **HOWEVER GIRLS WHO PLAY VIDEO GAMES ARE MORE LIKELY TO PURSUE STEM CAREERS THAN THOSE WHO DON'T**
- **THREE IN FIVE YOUNG WOMEN SAY A FEMALE ROLE MODEL INSPIRES THEIR DECISION TO FOLLOW A CAREER IN STEM**

Video games could play a surprising role in getting young women interested in a career in STEM – according to a new study.

To celebrate International Woman's Day, new research from the publishers of Scars Above – a videogame about a lone female astronaut and scientist stranded on a hostile alien planet – reveals a third of 14–19-year-olds females who play video games are more likely to be interested in a career in STEM then those who do not (33% v 22%).

The report, which explores what motivates the next generation of young women to pursue a STEM career, shows girl gamers are more likely to go on to study STEM subjects at A level (46%) compared to those who don't (40%). Overall, over half (52%) of female students are planning to study a STEM subject, with this rising to 61% of males.

MAYBE IT IS ROCKET SCIENCE?

Of those young women who *do* or *plan* to study a STEM subject at A-level, enjoyment of the subject is the main factor (43%), though 37% believe it makes them more likely to get a good job and 19% were supported to do so by their parents. Conversely amongst those not taking a STEM subject, a lack of interest is also the key reason (34%), though 37% don't think they're good at the subjects and 26% mention they are too difficult.

Looking at subject breakdowns, Art and English are the most enjoyed subjects for girls at school (34% and 32% respectively), whilst maths was favoured by male students (34%). When it comes to what subjects they think they're best at, the same gender divide remains with female students stating English (36%) compared to Maths for males (40%) – in fact seven in ten males (72%) stated they were best at a STEM subject compared to just 54% of females.

WHEN I GROW UP…

Of those young girls who are interested in pursuing a career in STEM, 69% of them say a female role model inspired their decision – compared to 43% motivated by male role models. More generally, two thirds (67%) of young people say that female role models inspire them with their careers, rising to 81% of women. While they have been inspired, three quarters (74%) say they would like to see more role models in their chosen career, with this view particularly prominent amongst women (81%).

WOMEN STEM IDOLS

If it were possible, the women in STEM that most aspire to or would like to meet is Marie Curie (33%), followed by Rosalind Franklin (29%) and Ada Lovelace (19%). Looking at role models on a more fictional level, Tomb Raider's Lara Croft (33%), Shuri the Princess and Scientist from Black Panther (33%) and the Astrophysicist Dr Jane Foster from the Marvel Universe (32%) are the women in STEM they'd most like to meet.

Many gamers play games that require a great deal of planning, strategic thinking and using logic to achieve goals within the game. Indeed, simulations are the most popular type of game (39%) amongst girl gamers, followed by puzzlers (38%) and action-adventure (35%).

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The research indicates 85% of female students play video games and are averaging 5.5 hours each week – in contrast to 95% of males in the same age group who are clocking up 9.9 hours.

Joining us in the studio to discuss the research is Mathematician, Physicist, STEM Ambassador and aspiring Astronaut – Dr Jackie Bell. Jackie will also explain why it's so important to encourage more girls to take up these subjects at school and close the STEM career gender gap.