Social Physics
Julie Arliss

Social Physics – Julie Arliss

A number of academic disciplines have argued that humans are not really free. Humans are conditioned by society and by their genetic profile. We are essentially animals and the human brain generates the illusion of an independent mind with free will. The mind is like a computer. Social physics uses Big Data to study human animals and seeks ways to predict and control people. Together these claims undermine the very possibility of being an individual.

1. What is it to be an 'individual'? What would you say there is a difference between an individual tree (or any object) and an individual person?

2. What is it to become an individual?

3. What do you think of the computational theory of mind. (It claims that my brain is like a computer that simply analyses data sent to it from the senses.)

4. What would you say are the strengths of using Big Data in Social Physics?

5. There is a legal distinction between a person's private life and their public life. Why do you think this distinction is now regarded as insecure?

6. Would you be happy to have all your digital data stored and analysed? Do you think that would mean that your future actions could be predicted?

7. Do you have the ability to choose? If I could predict your choice would that mean that you were not freely choosing it?

8. Research someone that you consider to be, or have been, a great 'individual' and decide what it means to say that individuality is 'achieved difference.'

9. Why do you think so few people are signing up for trace and track apps which promise to control Covid-19 outbreaks?