

AIN'T SCARED

Michèle Leduc – My field is quantum physics. I built experiments all along my carrier, I enjoy playing with instruments, I love lasers. I care for experiments demonstrating predicted properties which eventually turn unexpected... For the last twenty years my activity dealt with cold atoms.

When I listen to young students who hesitate to choose a carrier, I first try to discourage them to do research, insisting that it is hard job, difficult to get to the top, and that it is bad for your ego, you are constantly facing the smartest people in the world, you are never the best – with exception... one cannot feel like handling the situation, one never does, always facing one's weaknesses. In a second time I tell them that research is the most wonderful job of all, like for artists. The life of a researcher is rather abstract and dry, playing piano helps to relax and brain wash. Piano requires much concentration, but on something else than work, it helps making a step out. One forgets being tired by tiring on something different.

Public opinion is increasingly skeptical. People think they are well informed basically through Internet, they get information by themselves. Actually one finds many ideas today which are presented as challenging well established truths. Some people claim they do not believe in quantum mechanics, others in relativity. They think being competent in one domain validates their opinion on others, such as relativity. Scientists have to balance between truths, well established by experiments or theories, and simple opinions which contradict these truths.

When you start talking about your scientific activity you expect your example to be attractive. What you get is “wonderful but not for me, too hard, I shall never make it” The problem is more crucial with young girls. They are good at school, but after the baccalaureate degree there is a waste of girls in scientific carriers. They think science is dry, one cannot chat on science with friends, art or humanities are more meant for them. There is a need for science clubs demonstrating to the young ones that science is meant for them, not only for genius or people they don't know. This would show them that science can be fun, and even leading to a real job.

4min 05sec