

...with Annette Karmiloff-Smith

Professorial Research Fellow at Birkbeck College, University of London

One person who inspired you I had thought that psychology was just about psychoanalysis or reaction time and questionnaires, but Piaget taught me that it embraced logic, physics, biology, mathematics, evolution, genetics, anthropology and, above all, development, in the deepest sense of the term.

One moment that changed the course of your career Discovering that, if they have a strong theory, children (and scientists, for that matter!) ignore counter-evidence which is staring them in the face.

One alternative career path you might have chosen Novelist. I love writing. Once a reviewer of a paper I sent to *Cognition* said it read more like a novel than a scientific paper. They meant it as an insult, but I took it as a

compliment! My younger daughter, Kyra, is fulfilling that dream for me, and she's



Annette Karmiloff-Smith
a.karmiloff-smith@bbk.ac.uk

far more talented than I would have been.

One book that you think all psychologists should read Well, nepotism aside, my husband's *Developmental*

Cognitive Neuroscience (Mark Johnson: Blackwell, 2005). Even those studying adults should read it; it will make them think more dynamically.

One great thing that psychology has achieved Developing methods, such as high-density event-related potentials, to chart changing brain activity over time in young infants.

One challenge you think psychology faces Moving from a focus on static blobs in the brain to really understanding the dynamics of cerebral networks.

One thing that you would change about psychologists Have them all understand that studying infants and children does not necessarily equate to studying development.

One nugget of advice for aspiring psychologists Find a deep, burning question that you really want to answer. Some satisfy themselves with a string of atheoretical variations on an experimental theme, something I find very boring.

One cultural recommendation Passolini's film, *Theorema*,

which marries Marxism, psychoanalysis, Christianity, etc. Every time I watch it, I discover something new.

One hero/heroine from psychology past or present The late Elizabeth Bates. She was an example to young female academics that one can be an inspiring female, a caring mother and a brilliant scientist, all at the same time.

One thing that 'organised psychology' could do better Increase the number of awards to aspiring psychologists, like the USA does.

One hope for the future More cross-syndrome, cross-domain studies to understand what is common and what is really specific to each syndrome.

One problem that psychology should deal with Drop the sterile nature/nurture debate, in favour of gaining a less superficial understanding of the changing relations over time between gene expression and cognitive/behavioural outcomes.

One regret Not having had hands-on experience with genetics and animal models in far more depth.

One last opinion Obligatory retirement is shortsighted. Some cannot wait to retire and they rightly make room for younger scientists, but productive scientists should be allowed to continue.

I don't intend to stop before I'm 93 years old, as I told one of my seven grandchildren!

resources

Karmiloff-Smith, A. (1998). Development itself is the key to understanding developmental disorders. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 2(10), 389-398.
Karmiloff-Smith, A. (2007). Atypical epigenesis. *Developmental Science*, 10(1), 84-88.

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