

... with Lydia M. Hopper

'I'm fascinated by animals'

One event that defined the course of your career

When I was around 10 years old, I visited the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre in Malaysia where I was fortunate to observe rehabilitant orphaned orangutans climbing through the trees and exploring the jungle. I had always been fascinated by animals, but seeing these methodical and thoughtful creatures piqued my interest in primates specifically. Therefore, whilst an undergraduate at Liverpool University, I sought opportunities to study the orangutans at Chester Zoo and that was the true beginning of my career studying primate (both human and nonhuman!) social cognition.

One inspiration

My parents. I hope they can, collectively, count as 'one'. Beyond instilling in me a love and respect for animals, they also taught me to question



Lydia M. Hopper is Assistant Director of the Lester E. Fisher Center for the Study & Conservation of Apes, Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago
lhopper@lpzoo.org

and challenge – perfect attributes for a scientist. Between them, they continually encourage me to pursue my interests and to find roles that I find satisfying and stimulating.

One proud moment

Most recently, being invited by the Gruter Institute for Law and Behavioral Research to provide a comparative perspective on the psychology of innovation, as part of a workshop held at the House of Lords.

One film

I adore the BBC's adaption of Stella Gibbons' *Cold Comfort Farm* directed by John Schlesinger; it is an enduring pick-me-up for me. The cast is fantastic, a real who's who of British drama, and I especially enjoy the beautiful period 1920s costumes, which create the striking contrast between country and city life. It is especially lovely to watch now that I live in America as many of the scenes were filmed in East Sussex where I grew up, and so watching this film whisks me back to my familiar countryside of rolling hills and Sussex farmhouses.

One book

The Mentality of Apes by

Wolfgang Köhler. Although originally published in 1925, it is amazing to me how contemporary many of the experiments that Köhler conducted, and described in his book, feel. Unlike many of his peers, who were interested in how individual animals solved problems, Köhler noted the importance of understanding how the behaviour of one chimpanzee influenced another's actions. That's something I continue to observe and study through my own research into primate social learning.

One key ingredient to successful research

Collaboration, especially interdisciplinary collaboration, as it encourages you to look at your research questions and methods from a fresh perspective, which in turn helps to produce more interesting and rigorous research. Furthermore, collaboration with individuals or institutions outside of academia can be incredibly valuable, especially when trying to reach or influence a wider audience with your research.

One alternative career path you might have chosen

One of my favourite aspects of my job is writing, so I think one alternative career path that I might have pursued would be as a science reporter. I could spend my time communicating science to a wider audience, which is a passion of mine.

One mentor

My former postdoc adviser, Dr Sarah Brosnan, was an incredible mentor. She not only fostered my scientific skills and interests, but also shared insights into how to balance work and family life,

something that is not often actively explored.

One thing that you would change about psychology

The desire to gloss over variance in data. I study differences across species, but differences within species can be equally meaningful. No data set is perfect and that is interesting in its own right, especially when considering personality differences as an explanatory variable.

One cultural recommendation

With its views out over the sea and the glorious Cornish light pouring in through the



windows, Tate St. Ives is a lovely space in which to spend an afternoon.

One future goal for your research

To combine pure and applied research in every study that I run at Lincoln Park Zoo. I continually strive to conduct research that is academically interesting and that also helps inform how we can provide the best possible care for our primates – my personal goal for the future is to conduct research that can achieve both goals simultaneously.

One nugget of advice for aspiring psychologists

If used well, social media can be a wonderful forum to connect with researchers, hear about the latest research, and communicate with your wider community.

Cricket, monsters, animals in captivity and much more...

Contribute: reach 50,000 colleagues, with something to suit all. See www.thepsychologist.org.uk/contribute or talk to the editor, Dr Jon Sutton, on jon.sutton@bps.org.uk, +44 116 252 9573

Comment: email the editor, the Leicester office, or tweet @psychmag.

To advertise: Reach a large and professional audience at bargain rates: see details on inside front cover.