

...with Anne Treisman

Professor of Psychology at Princeton University

One inspiration

Richard Gregory was my tutor during my one-year undergraduate degree in psychology. He made tutorials exciting, partly through his own excitement in the ideas. They were all completely new to me (my first degree was in French literature), and he bypassed the then current topics of behaviour theory (which would have left me cold) and introduced the new ideas of information theory, vision as cognition, and the relation of brain to mind. And he made it all wonderful fun.

One moment that changed the course of your career

The decision to move to North America. It put me in touch with a much wider range of contacts and openings, although I still miss the British psychological scene.

One book that you think all psychologists should read

Stephen Pinker's *How the Mind Works*.

One impact of my feature integration theory

The binding problem has challenged philosophers, neuroscientists and computer scientists (as well as me), and the empirical evidence I reported contributed relevant findings to the discussion.

One challenge you think psychology faces

Understanding consciousness. Francis Crick believed the problem would melt away as the science advanced and more data were discovered, just as the problem of life did. But I am not even sure of that.

One regret

Not having any background in neuroscience or mathematics. These would have increased my understanding of psychology. The school system in England forced a choice of just three subjects at age 15 and I chose French, Latin and History. Still, I can't regret my first degree in French literature because I enjoyed it and was enriched by it.

One memory of Wakefield

None, since I was only two when we left. My memories start with the war years in Kent, the air raids that we spent in the cellar, the barrage balloons at the bottom of the garden, the blackout, and the map of Europe that my father updated with flags to mark the advance of the Allied Forces.

One great thing about being married to a Nobel Prize winner' (Daniel Kahneman)

The interesting people we meet – not least my husband himself.

One nugget of advice for aspiring psychologists

Enjoy the excitement of finding out about the mind and testing your own hunches within the framework of current research. But if one idea doesn't work out, move on to the next rather than throwing good time after bad.

One cultural recommendation

Among movies I loved both

Les Enfants du Paradis and *Annie Hall*.

One alternative career path

I did apply for a job teaching French at a high school, and have been deeply grateful to them for turning me down ever since. If I had to choose again, a good possibility would be neurology, but I am pretty happy to be an experimental psychologist

One thing I've learnt from Buddhist monks

A completely different view of the human condition. I am not able to share it, but it has enlarged my notion of human possibilities.



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resource

Treisman, A. (1998). Feature binding, attention and object perception. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society, Series B*, 353, 1295–1306. 'Outlines my feature integration theory, using converging evidence from a variety of experimental paradigms to support what might seem on the face of it an unlikely hypothesis.'

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