

...with John Sloboda

Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Keele University

One inspiration

A former colleague at Keele, Martin Dent. On his retirement in 1990 at the age of 65, he decided to instigate the 'Jubilee 2000' campaign to remove the debt burden from the world's poorest nations. This movement involved millions worldwide, and forced the President of the United States and other world leaders to promise things they would otherwise have never contemplated. This proves two things: that one person can change the course of the world decisively, and that it is never too late in life to start something completely new.

One journal article or book that you think all psychologists should read

The series of studies by Chase and Ericsson on an individual who, during the course of the study, improved from a digit memory span of average (7) to world's best (80). The careful long-term documentation (and explanation) of how the ordinary can develop into the

extraordinary was an exemplary breakthrough for a subdiscipline (cognitive psychology) dominated by the study of static short-term processes revealed through the statistical collation of results from many closely similar individuals.

One moment that changed the course of your career

Meeting the late Michael J. Howe (of Exeter University) quite by chance at a conference that we both found boring. We sloped off together to the pub, and by the end of the conference had made decisions that led to the most productive and long-standing research collaboration of my academic life.

One challenge you think psychology faces

Psychology and psychologists need to find ways to increase their credibility and influence with the political classes, particularly the leadership of major nations, and the CEOs of multinational corporations.

One regret

That I never lived or worked outside the UK.

One thing that you would change about psychology

Engage more with the major issues of human survival (e.g.



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conflict, global warming, resource depletion, economic injustice). Psychology can seem a bit comfortable with itself and inward looking.

One cultural recommendation

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time, by Mark

Haddon. A very fine example of how empathetic writing can put a reader into the experiential world of someone with a mental disorder.

One nugget of advice

Take as much time to consider what is important to do as what is feasible to do.

One alternative career path

Perhaps a performing musician, had I been willing to practise for the number of hours that my subsequent research proved necessary for high-level expertise!

One hero from psychology

Herbert Simon: he asked the biggest questions and combined knowledge and approaches from different disciplines to answer them.

One proud moment

Being elected to Fellowship of the British Academy in 2004, only the 24th psychologist so to be.

One great thing that psychology has achieved

Developing and promoting standardised methods for measuring performance, and advancing understanding of reliability and validity of such methods.

One hope for the future

That psychological 'first aid' becomes as prevalent a concept as physical first aid, and that helping skills are deprofessionalised to the fullest extent appropriate.

One more question

Why has psychology at degree level become more and more gender-unbalanced (currently 85 per cent female in my institution)?

resource

'My most recent book, *Psychology for Musicians* (with Andreas Lehmann and Robert Woody), is an attempt to give music psychology away to those without whom I would have had no productive research outputs to speak of.'

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