

... with Andrew Dunn

'Be patient, keep an open mind'

One moment that changed the course of your career

Going to night school aged 20 (I was working full time) and stumbling on GCSE Psychology (I got an A – my only A in anything). The following year I started A-levels and more GCSEs (all at night school). Another year later I applied to York (last space on my UCAS form actually). I sat an entrance for York because I didn't have the grades. I passed – still wondering how – and I was in. It was 1996, I was 22, it was the height of Britpop, the light of New Labour was shining and the world was full of possibilities. Without the University of York I would never have made the many great friends I have, or found my wonderful wife (Catherine) and made our wonderful family.

One love

Love is biochemistry and circumstance (Tim Minchin has a song about that). As a



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scientist, I am sold on the biochemical basis of love, but for me there's so much more to human experience, even if it's not directly causal. If you can't feel what Otis Redding is emoting on 'These Arms of Mine' then you have never truly felt romantic love. Let's not kill the arts and humanities off just yet.

One regret

I should have been braver in the past, but I only know that in hindsight.

One thing you'd like to see happen

I'd like to see psychologists working towards a unified psychological science that integrates social and environmental variables with biological and cognitive reality. A properly informed data-led understanding of developmental processes across the lifespan should be at the heart of this. A good approximation of my own viewpoint can be found in Dunbar, Barrett and Lycett (2007) *Evolutionary Psychology: A Beginner's Guide*. I'd also highly recommend Swami's (2011) *Evolutionary Psychology: A Critical Introduction* because it cuts through a lot of the nonsense spouted about evolution. Both

texts are mindful of following data, of blending various approaches and avoiding theoretical dogma. They're also very readable.

One nugget of advice for aspiring academic psychologists

Success is relative, and careers are something you have in hindsight. Be patient, keep an open mind and enjoy the journey. There's more to being an academic than academic publishing and grant capture (though they are important). The best academics (many of whom are highly cited) were/are also great teachers and communicators.

One cultural recommendation

Book: Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. It changed everything for me. Also read Zamyatin's *We*, and comic *Britten and Brulightly* by Hannah Berry. It's beautifully inked and cleverly written. Film: *Rocky* (1976). It's not about winning, it's about going the distance, taking opportunities when they come and seeing things through. Album: Pulp's *A Different Class* – Clever, funny, poignant. Song: Almost impossible. Either, Sam Cooke's 'Bring It On Home To Me' (it's sublime), or James' 'Sit Down' (my university anthem), or 'Up the Junction' by Squeeze, or maybe 'Dignity' by Deacon Blue (it reminds me of my dad).

We said one cultural recommendation

OK then, David Bowie – no competition really. The Beatles changed the world but he just kept on ch-ch-changing.

One guilty pleasure

I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue.

One academic hero

Indiana Jones.

Oh come on!

OK, I am fan of Donald Broadbent, but to be fair we all owe a great debt to Aristotle.

One great thing that psychology has achieved

I am still waiting. No point in resting on our laurels just yet.

One thing all psychologists should be concerned about

Mental health and mental health provision. I have lost sleep worrying about this. Put simply there's not enough funding, knowledge or communication (anywhere). Definitions aside (the term,



mental health is highly problematic), we simply don't understand enough about typical mental life, let alone anything else. There are legions of (wonderful) people out there wanting and trying to help, but they're hampered because we know so little and there's so little funding or governmental will (the provision for transition from child-adolescent to adult mental health care is scandalous). People do get better of course and we are making progress, but I think we only see the sharpest end. Most mental health issues remain hidden because of stigma or because it's just about manageable (and ignored). At the very least we (psychologists) have a responsibility to remove the stigma.

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