

... with **Marcus Munafò**

'Science is a very social process'

One reason why you became a psychologist

It was chance! I wanted to read philosophy at university, but at Oxford you have to do philosophy with something. I chose philosophy and psychology, mainly because psychology sounded quite interesting. I'd applied to do single honours philosophy at the other universities I was applying to. After my undergraduate degree I simply kept studying because I was still finding psychology interesting. In a sense I'm still doing that, and one of the reasons I have such a mixed bag of interests is because of this. I have a tendency to follow whatever seems interesting at the time.

One rewarding aspect of your work

I love the intellectual and personal freedom. I can have an idea about an interesting research question and get straight down to answering it the next day. There's no one to

tell me what I should study. Of course, some research questions need substantial resources to answer, but not all of them do. We're doing a lot of work using publicly available data from genomewide association studies, and all that really requires is time and effort.

One frustrating aspect of your work

There are the usual frustrations – bureaucracy, too many e-mails, that sort of thing. Every job has those though. For the most part I really enjoy my work; the thrill of feeling you might be onto something – a new finding or idea – is unique. One thing I have become concerned about are the incentive structures that scientists work within – the pressure to publish, get grants, generate exciting findings isn't conducive to good science. It's hard not to respond to these

pressures. Fortunately, funding bodies, journals, societies and scientists themselves are thinking about how to address this, but it's a complex problem.

One of the main challenges facing psychology today

I'm not the only one concerned about the impact of incentive structures in science, and there's a lot of debate around the 'reproducibility crisis' in psychology and other

career, and made all the difference. Part of what attracted me to Bristol was the people, and I still work with many of those people (even the ones that are no longer at Bristol). Science is a very social process – you need to share ideas and collaborate on a daily basis.

One other job you could have done

Another thing that I love about academic life is that the flexibility gives you the opportunity to pursue other interests. I've been a rowing coach and served in the Army Reserves – both in my spare time. So if I hadn't been a psychologist I probably would have followed one of those paths instead. But I've been lucky enough to be able to do all three, rather than just one...

One film

Pulp Fiction – it's the only film where I wanted to go back in and watch it again straight away after seeing it.

One way to unwind

Being near water – near it, on it or in it, I find rivers, lakes and the sea (even swimming pools) incredibly relaxing.

One favourite research finding

Smokers will change how they smoke when they switch from high-tar to low-tar cigarettes, so as to extract the same amount of nicotine. I think that's a lovely demonstration of how behaviour can be under close biological control. It also means low-tar cigarettes are just as bad for you as the high-tar ones!

sciences. I certainly don't think the problems are unique to psychology – all disciplines have their own problems, and there are some issues (such as the pressure to publish or get grants) that apply across the board.

One important influence

I couldn't name just one! I was really fortunate to work for some fantastic people early in my career – intellectually generous and willing to let me follow my own ideas. That was perfect for me in my early

One place

Bamburgh in Northumberland – a beautiful (and generally empty) beach, hills and dunes to get lost in, and a stunning castle as backdrop. And the sea, of course...



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