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Changing theoretical approaches to developmental science: from typical to atypical development

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Annette Karmiloff-Smith est professeure au *Birkbeck Centre for Brain & Cognitive Development, University of London*. De 1972 à 1980, elle a été l'élève de Jean Piaget au Centre International d'Epistémologie Génétique à Genève où ses recherches portaient sur le développement cognitif normal. Jusqu'en 2003, elle a été professeure et cheffe de l'Unité de développement neurocognitif de l'Institut pour la santé de l'enfant à Londres. Depuis plus de trente ans, elle est reconnue pour ses travaux sur la psychologie des bébés. Ses recherches actuelles portent sur des populations atypiques, notamment sur les enfants atteints du syndrome de Williams.

Résumé de la conférence

Developmental science has been changing considerably over the past decades. From the popularity of Piaget's domain-general Constructivism in the 1960/70s emerged a return in the 1980s/90s to Nativist, domain-specific views, particularly in experimental studies of infancy from which the amazing capacities of typically developing infants were revealed. The atypical development of children with genetic disorders was interpreted in similar ways, i.e., damage to domain-specific modules with the rest of the system intact, much like the models emanating from adult neuropsychology. More recently, a swing back to a modified version of Constructivism – Neuroconstructivism – argues for neither domain-general nor domain-specific starting states, but one of domain-relevant biases that *become* domain-specific over developmental time through the mechanism of neuronal competition. It is these initial biases and their differential cascading effects on different domains that are currently being used for interpreting genetic disorders in children. In my view, as we discover increasingly more about gene expression and functional/structural changes in the brain as ontogenesis proceeds, this dynamic Neuroconstructivist view will predominate because it takes account of multiple-level interactions.