

ABSTRACT

The importance of cross-syndrome comparisons for understanding autism: a developmental approach.

Annette Karmiloff-Smith Birkbeck Centre for Brain & Cognitive Development, University of London

Scientists tend to focus on single domains and single syndromes, searching for dissociations in children, similar to those found in brain-damaged adults. However, the developing brain is very different from the adult end-state brain. So, rather than dissociations, the search for cross-syndrome associations can yield deeper insights and raise new cognitive-level and neural-level questions. In this talk I will show how cross-syndrome/cross-domain comparisons of Autism Spectrum Disorders, Williams syndrome and Down syndrome allow us to pinpoint basic, domain-general deficits in infancy, with cascading effects over developmental time, that yield what become domain-specific deficits in the phenotypic outcome in older children and adults.