



**Patricia H. Miller**

**I was born on a farm in Kansas in 1945 - yes, the wholesome heartland. I grew up surrounded by animals, including the 17 cats who were attracted to our dairy farm. I attended a one-room country school and never had a classmate in the same grade until I went to "town school" in the big city of Wellington (Kansas, that is) in the eighth grade. We didn't know that, with only one room, we had an "open classroom." Much of what I learned came from listening to the teacher instructing all the other grades. Since the teacher taught 8 subjects for 8 grades (64 preparations every day!) she happily let me do my lessons by myself at my own pace. I finished grades 1-3 by December of my first year, so for the rest of the year she let me just read whatever I wanted to from the small library and sometimes tutor the other young children.**

**After my high school years, which I'd just as soon forget, I followed my older brother to the University of Kansas. Nursing, teaching, and secretarial work were considered the only appropriate options for women in rural Kansas in those days. Since I liked biology I chose nursing. In my first semester I took Introductory Psychology, and never looked back. I felt like my life was finally beginning, as I took classes in philosophy, art history, biology, and anthropology, as well as psychology. Although my parents told me I'd never get a job in psychology, and women needed something to fall back on in case something happened to their husband, I forged on. Like the majority of psychology majors, I wanted to be a clinical psychologist. An experimental course with Bill Epstein and a developmental course from Fran Horowitz (later President of CUNY) turned me into an experimental psychologist. I got to know Fran through my roommate and best friend,**

Sara Paretsky, who now is a well-known feminist detective novel writer (creator of the V. I. Warshawsky series). As an undergraduate I also studied Russian and went to Russia on a study-abroad program during the Cold War years. I remember standing in Red Square at midnight and thinking "Now I know I'm not in Kansas any more." These were great years.

My boyfriend and I applied to graduate school but he drew a bad draft number and so enlisted in the army rather than be drafted and sent to Vietnam. The Institute of Child Development at the University of Minnesota was considered the best place to study developmental psychology so I began my graduate studies there in 1966. I had the good luck to have John Flavell as my mentor. He was tremendously supportive of his grad students and had such clever ideas about how to study children's thinking. The Institute provided an intellectual feast during an exciting period in psychology. U. S. psychologists were discovering Piaget, Chomsky's transformational grammar was challenging behaviorist perspectives on language acquisition, and Neisser's breakthrough book on cognition had just come out. A steady stream of visiting scholars brought the newest and best ideas to us. For example, the European ethologist Eibl-Eibesfeldt taught a class on applying ethology to human development. One summer I was a research assistant for one of these visiting scholars, Eleanor Gibson. When I proposed what I thought was a brilliant dissertation on perceptual learning and memory, she said "There's no such thing as memory; what's your next idea?"

My first publication as a graduate student research assistant was on rabbits' and kittens' performance on the visual cliff. Since we began testing daily right after birth, the kittens became attached to us, so when placed on the middle walkway on the cliff just ran into our arms, ignoring the cliff. Ultimately, my dissertation was Piagetian, with an information-processing spin. I thought, and still think, that Piaget's idea that infant sensory-motor understanding gradually is transformed into adult abstract thinking is one of the most brilliant ideas ever. At age 24 I defended my dissertation a week after my first child was born (I had married a fellow student) and we moved to Ann Arbor to take positions at the University of Michigan. At one Society for Research in Child Development conference, at our request, they started a conference child care service, which was a radical notion then, even for a child research organization. Our son was born three years later and my life became a

juggling act of work and family. Several cold snowy years later we moved to the University of Florida, which brought very good years both professionally and personally. With beginner's luck, I obtained an NSF grant on my first try (in my later attempts I was surprised to learn that it is not always that easy). I was blessed with a series of smart and funny graduate students. Together we had a very productive lab in the areas of children's memory, attention, strategies, and metacognition. As a transplanted Midwest family we had fun exploring the beaches and other pleasures of Florida. Living in the South also provided a new perspective on the world. Unlike what we were taught north of the Mason-Dixon line, I learned that the "Civil War" was actually the "War of Northern Aggression."

In 1995 I became an Associate Dean in the liberal arts college, which was a fascinating adventure in learning how a university works (or more often doesn't work). After a 4-year term, and a divorce, I did a sabbatical at Emory University, and then became Director of Women's Studies at the University of Georgia. My theoretical thinking had turned to feminist theories of knowledge, and I began writing about their implications for theories of cognitive development. I then became department head in Psychology at UGA from 2005-2009, which I think was my best job ever, despite the strain of concurrently being Associate Editor at *Child Development* and President of Division 7 of APA. The department was full of bright, funny, and productive faculty. With such talent to work with it was easy to look like I was doing a good job. I think that the fun of administration is to try to solve problems creatively.

I feel very lucky that, after nearly 40 years in developmental psychology and academia I can still say that I love my work and never have felt burned out. I still am amazed that I happened to fall into the most interesting area of study I can imagine - how the mind develops.