

## Catherine Ann Cameron

- Born in New Westminster, British Columbia, Canada
- B.A. in English and Psychology (1960) University of British Columbia, M.A. in Psychology (1964) University of British Columbia, Ph.D. in Psychology (1967) University of London

### Major Employment

- Honorary Professor, Psychology Department, University of British Columbia: 1999-Present
- University of New Brunswick
  - Professor: 1981-1999
  - Associate Dean, School of Graduate Studies and Research: 1980-1985
  - Associate Professor: 1975-1981



### Major Areas of Work

- Acquisition of thoughts, language, and emotions of children and youths

### SRCD Affiliation

- Member since 1964

## SRCD Oral History Interview

Catherine Ann Cameron  
University of British Columbia, Canada

Interviewed by Leslie Cameron  
In Kenosha, Wisconsin  
May 16, 2010

L. Cameron: So this is the SRCD oral history interview of Catherine Ann Cameron, who is currently an Honorary Professor in the Psychology Department and in the Human Early Learning Partnership at the University of British Columbia, Canada. The interviewer is Leslie Cameron. I'm an Associate Professor of Psychology in the Psychology Department at Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and I'm the daughter of Catherine Ann Cameron. Today is May 16<sup>th</sup> and we are in Kenosha, Wisconsin in the United States.

So could you start by describing your family background, along with any childhood and adolescent experiences that may be of interest, including your education and the occupational status of your parents, where you were born, grew up, your schooling and early work experience?

C.A. Cameron: So I was born in New Westminster, British Columbia, Canada and grew up at the west coast of Canada. My mother was a psychiatric registered nurse and my father was a locomotive engineer with the Canadian National Railway. He was a significantly older father. I was born when he was 52 and he died when he was 59 when I was six years old. That was when my mother was widowed, and so I was raised by a widowed psychiatric nurse. But I was a very privileged child in many ways. I had a sensitive, devoted parent.

L. Cameron: How about your schooling?

C.A. Cameron: I attended numerous schools, and that was not an easy experience, because I was a very shy child. But I feel that, academically, that turned out to create a bit of a cushion for me. I had tuberculosis as an adolescent, so I did spend several years of my regular schooling in bed in

sanatoriums and so forth, which helped make me quite introspective as a young person and certainly I did a great deal of reading, especially English literature. When I recovered I went to the University of British Columbia where I earned my bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology.

**L. Cameron: How about your early work experience?**

C.A. Cameron: Oh yes. Because of my weaknesses, my physical weaknesses, I didn't do a lot of work other than babysitting. But I earned my way through college with heavy-duty babysitting. At an early age I fancied that I would be a governess and look after young children, and that was rooted in my English literature reading, I'm sure. In some sense I never thought of myself other than as being involved with some kind of child study or childcare.

My first grade experience was that I learned to read so very quickly. In fact, I probably knew how to read before I went to school and I thought that the most honorable profession would be to be a first grade teacher and teach "all the other little children" as I put it, to learn to read, or so they told me I said. So when I did go to the University of British Columbia I thought that I would be a first grade teacher. I started university thinking I would go into education, but quickly found that philosophy and anthropology and sociology and psychology (the subjects I wanted to study) were not the 'teachable' subjects I would need to become a primary school teacher and so I abandoned that career goal and went into psychology and did my first degree, my honors degree, at the University of British Columbia in psychology. I wasn't confident by that point that I would then go back to education, but in fact, I never did.

I went with my then husband to Berkeley where he earned a master's degree in English literature. I did some studying that year but we went back to Canada and I decided it would be a good idea for me to get a master's degree, because by this point I had one child and I thought it would be good to have some kind of training beyond being able to baby-sit if I were ever to support a family. I had four children by the ages of 22, 24, 26 and 28, all the while studying except for adopting our last son when I was doing postdoctoral research. I'm sure that my children had a formative influence on my venturing into developmental psychology, although as an undergraduate I didn't plan to focus on developmental psychology.

**L. Cameron: Were there any other early adult experiences that were important to your intellectual development?**

C.A. Cameron: I think the parenthood was a very large one. I became a pacifist, a feminist and was influenced by many of the issues of the 1960s. And so I took my psychological studies quite seriously in the sense of thinking of my studies as steering me to be a better citizen, a better parent, and I was quite active politically in those days.

**L. Cameron: Other than your thinking you were going to do education and switching because you enjoyed other fields of study, were there other origins of your interest in child development?**

C.A. Cameron: It's interesting to see this now, but I think that during my very early years of study in Canada, the US, and the UK I became implicitly sensitive to the potential for cross-cultural work. It may seem strange to think, but being in Vancouver and then going to Berkeley (which although just 'down the road,' and even migrating to London, which is again within our own cultural heritage), those relocations, in terms of my thinking or actually the constructive experiences of seeing other parts of the world -- they weren't too far beyond me in some sense -- but on the other hand they certainly put me in a very different frame for my perspectives on developmental psychology, because I realized that there wasn't a single mold. Even though we look alike our cultural backgrounds (Canada, the US, and the UK) our psychological backgrounds, even if we're just across a very, very subtle border, makes us very different people, and I know that as I started to do research I was quite aware of being (not a nationalistic Canadian, but) a Canadian who saw the world through somewhat different lenses from my U.S. colleagues and from my British colleagues. And it wasn't that I wanted to study Canadian

psychology so much, but I became aware that deep cultural differences that we have within us do form how we socialize and how we were socialized, so that was formative for me I think.

**L. Cameron: What individuals were important in your intellectual development in terms of research mentors or significant colleagues?**

C.A. Cameron: Well, I remember Bronfenbrenner, probably number one, partly because as I nursed my first child I remembered his work on societal influences on maternal nursing. It was his research that showed that middle class and upper middle class Americans were veering away from nursing babies because of their upwardly mobile socioeconomic status, and in 1960 I planned to nurse my babies and so was very interested in Bronfenbrenner's cross-cultural work and his ecological model, as it came out really thrilled me. So Bronfenbrenner would be one. I think Bruner would be two. We invited him to the University of New Brunswick as soon as I got there. I was a postdoctoral fellow, but was given the opportunity to invite somebody to come and Bruner's work both in his concepts of early learning and his conception of development were ones that I found very compatible with my own thinking. I was extremely interested in Lev Vygotski's work. Again, it felt like it was reflecting something that I understood. I wasn't attracted at the beginning to Piaget, because I couldn't really get my head around ages and stages back then, though I read him and I read Flavell's book with my doctoral research supervisor, Joan Wynn Reeves, who was a significant influence on my thinking. She was my supervisor at Bedford College at the University of London and Joan Wynn Reeves (*Thinking about Thinking*, 1966) certainly brought me toward Piaget in a way that I hadn't been brought before, and I loved some of Piaget's theoretical thinking, mostly the work on invariant intellectual functioning (not the stages) was what interested me then. And Dr. Reeves also introduced me to the work of Mary Ainsworth (a wartime friend and colleague of hers) and although at the time, that didn't catch hold, I did ultimately come to be intensely interested in attachment in relationships, but that was quite a bit later. And Brian Foss, as well as Joan Wynn Reeves, was a significant influence on my psychological thinking and served me well as I matured in my theorizing. But given that I was a mother during my formative years in psychology, I wasn't out and about in the academic world a lot -- I didn't go to a conference until my youngest child was six years old. I was isolated in the home with my children and my professional journals and books and they influenced me most.

**L. Cameron: You mentioned a little bit about your political views, but were there political and social events that influenced your research, your writing, your teaching, or other professional activities?**

C.A. Cameron: Well, I did post docs at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia and then at the University of New Brunswick, and was very much affected by the schooling movement and so started what some would call a 'free school'. I was interested in A.S. Neil's work. But I was also very much interested in -- because, as I said, I was a pacifist -- very much interested -- I mean, a perfect example of the futility of war was the Vietnam War, but any war was something that was abhorrent to me. So again, I remember the saying, which I came across the other day, about 'war not being good for children or other living things,' I was very concerned that we create an environment for children the world around that would be safe and peaceful and, in consequence, my work with the Family Violence Research Center at UNB was very important to me later in my career.

**L. Cameron: Would you characterize the development of your ideas in the field of child development as evolving in a rather straightforward fashion or in a way that involved sharp turns in theoretical views or research style?**

C.A. Cameron: Pretty systematically. It started out I had three children the first time I taught at Dalhousie University, I taught one course as a post doc and I can remember being so delighted at the *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, because the observational work that had been done up to that point so radically underestimated the skills of the neonate. And I can remember having read Lipsitt's work and really feeling like, Oh my gosh, I mean, reading stuff that I'd never studied directly myself but having experienced as a parent, but being a little scared that I would say something and

somebody would come along and say, "Well, you know, that's only one study," or whatever, "and you have 30, 50 years of history of observational work that says babies can't do these things." Even Piaget would have been surprised. And here we were in a new time where the experimental manipulations that were being done were giving us such rich information about the neonate, and I was just so thrilled with that and I did want to do a lot of experimental work in the early years of my career and indeed I did. I worked on learning-set formation with little kids, I worked with discrimination learning and I found that extremely exciting.

There wasn't really a right or left turn when I decided I wanted to do some observational work because it seems to me now, and at the time I'm not so sure I was thinking so analytically about it, but I knew also that what we were doing experimentally, which was to give us some generalizable statements that we could make, we couldn't see the depth of understanding that we could get by going back and doing observational work. And Piaget was indeed the consummate observer, but close observation was also, I think, an important technique to be developing within even experimental child psychology. So after doing a fair bit of experimental manipulative work I decided to do some observational research and the area I was most interested in was emergent literacy. I had a colleague (Anne Hunt) that I could work well with and so we did a longitudinal study in which we observed children acquire emergent literacy skills, in particular, acquisition of written expression, and that was really quite thrilling. We worked with over 100 children in three classrooms and we followed them from first to third grade, and we observed their acquisition of literacy skills. That was a tremendous piece of work, but meanwhile I was still interested in doing experimental work and I had a wonderful doctoral student (Kang Lee), who tried to convince me that I would be interested in looking at children's understanding of others' minds by looking at their understanding of verbal deception, this time, cross-culturally.

And I resisted that for quite some time, but as he progressed through his doctoral studies Kang finally twisted my arm and we started looking at verbal deception with children. And he said that the original ideas came from -- he is Chinese, Chinese Canadian now -- but observing the differences between how I was raising my children and how his mother raised him. So it wasn't that either mother, that is, his mother or I, taught our children not to or to lie, but really more importantly under what circumstances was the truth absolutely necessary and when was a lie permitted or appropriate? And we apparently had very different views, from his perspective, so we got involved in doing this work, cross culturally working with colleagues that he had back in China. And by this point, of course, I'd been to China several times and was absolutely delighted at Chinese cultural approaches to child development and so felt very, very comfortable working with Chinese scholars. And so, though we started out looking at literacy, we moved quickly to the social conditions for verbal deception. We've been doing that research now for a decade and a half. So I would say that it certainly was informed by my experience, probably some of my experience teaching as well, not just with my doctoral students, but my undergraduate students for whom I found it increasingly difficult to be teaching developmental psychology out of a U.S.-produced textbook. I found Michael Cole's work on situating learning terribly important. And so I kind of shimmied here and there, but really developed a strong interest in multiple methods of investigation and chose topics that came out of my children and my student's experiences, as well as the theoretical and empirical literature.

I guess there's another piece in there. As I almost always conducted my research in schools and the schools were always asking me to test children, which I didn't do, and asking me to do this and that, I didn't do a lot of the kind of service work that they would have liked me to do. But they did ask me to do two things: one was evaluate a new French immersion program (and I have 'Canadian west coast' French, which is where I was educated, which isn't great spoken French for sure, though I did have a strong formal training in the language), but I felt that that was something that I could make as a contribution to the schools of New Brunswick; and then the other thing was I was asked to be involved in developing - actually, I guess I really was one of the instigators of this -- but we developed a Family Violence Research Center based partly on the request that I had from schools in New Brunswick to help them to monitor, intervene, and evaluate programs to prevent violence in schools. And so my involvement in establishing a Family Violence Research Center where I had a team called the Creating Peaceful Learning Environments team and we did implementation evaluation. That really came outside

my experience at first but, because of my sympathy with and concern for peaceful experiences for children, that took a fair amount of my pro bono time. And that also morphed into doing work on violence prevention with specific emphasis on girls, because I was interested in the effects of all sorts of social violence on girls and young women. So I did a lot of research there too.

**L. Cameron:** Okay. The next few questions ask you to reflect on your personal research contributions. So starting back at the beginning, what were your primary interests in child development early in your career?

**C.A. Cameron:** I think I was most interested in cognitive and language development and so I think that the early work that I did in evaluating a French immersion program, Wallace Lambert at McGill was a significant mentor in that early work. I didn't do the work for a long longitudinal period of time, but I worked with Helga Feider and I worked with Vicky Grey on the French immersion evaluation in the students' first through fourth grades, so it would have been language and cognitive development, the discrimination learning work that we did, some Piagetian concept development, and some Vygotskian studies: those would have been the areas in the early years that I pursued.

**L. Cameron:** And what things from that early work would you -- or maybe not necessarily from that -- but what continuities in your work do you think are the most significant, as well as the shifts?

**C.A. Cameron:** Yes. Well, I think that that continuity from my language and cognition research played through into the emergent literacy work a lot. In fact, they were probably major inputs. And I also developed an interest in mediated communications from the writing research, in how a child -- and this is the child's mind mindedness -- but how the child sees her or his audience and then can reflect the information back to the audience to enhance the audience's, or the listener's, understanding (or the reader, if the child's reading). And so I think that the Vygotsky, the Piaget, and the discrimination learning work, all of those programs of research went together to inform the emergent literacy work that came next, even though I wasn't necessarily always cognizant of how they were fitting or flowing. Certainly Bruner and I guess the contextual/ecological concepts, again Bronfenbrenner's models, were at my side.

**L. Cameron:** In terms of the shifts and changes, from what I've just heard you say, it seems like some of the things that resulted in changes in your focus over the years have either been contributions or interests that students have brought to your lab, and then also the interaction with the school system and needs or desires of outside institutions affecting. Does that sound like a fair characterization of how some of the shifts have happened?

**C.A. Cameron:** I think the shifts always only happened when I saw a good theoretical base for them. So yes, those were external stimuli, but if I couldn't see that I could ground it well in what I saw as the development of the discipline, or the developmental discipline in any case, then I couldn't go there. So I was always constrained by asking, do we have good grounds for investigating this? The other area that I started to move toward, and I remember as an undergraduate doing an essay on emotional development, well, it took me quite a while to be able to work through a perspective on emotions that I felt could tie in with cognition, because in the early days the cognitive and affective literatures were pretty far apart, and even though Piaget said that the emotions were the engine of the intellect, he didn't ever instantiate that empirically. So I think these things all percolated and when I got good theoretical grounds for doing the empirical work then I was fine with it.

**L. Cameron:** Okay. Could you reflect on the strengths of your research and the theoretical contributions or impact of your work? And then in a moment I'll ask you for weaknesses.

**C.A. Cameron:** Okay. I see internally in retrospect -- and, of course, at my age, it's a long retrospect - when I was in the midst of it I think it was like one daughter-in-law has said: I didn't know any better when I had so many babies at such a young age; I think that some of the reflection time that I have

now I didn't have back then. But I guess the strengths that I feel is in the work are in how one can pull together the old strands with the new ones. And I don't think I have the anxiety that I experienced in that first year as a post doc of being uncertain as to whether an initiative would bear fruit. And I think now with having done multi-modal, multi-methodological work I've developed intuitions and know where to go to look to explore the kinds of questions that I want to ask, and I feel comfortable to ask the questions I want to ask. I don't think I -- and then we'll get to the weaknesses -- I think that there was a time when I was quite anxious about not knowing whether my questions were good questions. And I think that that age has allowed me to have a certain sense of confidence in asking questions that I think are going to be good questions, even if it looks a little risqué or a little dangerous to go down a path that hasn't quite been explored yet.

**L. Cameron: Okay. And then how about the weaknesses?**

C.A. Cameron: Yes, I think the weaknesses do have to do with the fact that I was often a single investigator. I was in a small institution, didn't have opportunities to collaborate with a lot of peers; I didn't have a lot of mentors, and I think that I sometimes took little paths -- usually not for too long -- but I took roads that didn't bear the fruit that I would have liked them to. And on the other hand, I thought when I was an undergraduate I would love to start all over again and study endocrinology, when I was a graduate student I'd like to have started all over in primatology. Well, over the years I've gotten to finding questions where I could do some work on cortisol reactivity to stress of young human primates! And in fact, I'm doing a number of initiatives in that area now. So I think I didn't pursue some paths because of a lack of confidence and a lack of connection with the availability of strong colleagues to collaborate with, but now I know where to go to pursue the hard questions. If there's something that I don't know how to do I don't mind saying I don't know how to do it and soliciting good colleagues to collaborate with me. And I also, I think before I pursued what other people would ask of me, so it was more based on their invitation than my inclination. I think I'm much more comfortable with giving invitations to other people to help me now.

**L. Cameron: And what would you like to share with us about the current status of your research?**

C.A. Cameron: Well, what I'm doing right now I feel is just absolutely fantastic. We've just completed a book called *International Perspectives on Early Childhood Research: A Day in the Life*. Now, there is a project that (in the '80s I'd been in Honolulu and met with Joe Tobin and loved his research on preschools in three cultures), so a decade and a half later, in a very secluded academic 'think-tank' setting sponsored by Tara Callaghan at Saint Francis Xavier University, where we're to be dreaming big dreams about what to do for methodological innovations in child development, and with a wonderful colleague, Julia Gillen, a lovely innovative project emerged. I had taken along one of Tobin's videotapes and said, "How about we do something like this in socialization in early childhood?" And that blossomed into a seven site international naturalistic study -- relatively naturalistic anyway -- with two and a half year old girls; girls because they're under explored, two and a half year olds because we thought that it could be relatively less complex linguistically to do that, because we were working in Thailand, in Peru, in Italy -- around the globe -- Turkey, the U.S., Canada, and the UK and that project brought such joy to me. Oh, because of the wonderful colleagues that I worked with, we pursued emergent symbol systems there (Giulianna Pinto and Beatrice Accorti Gamannossi). I've pursued attachment relationships (Sombat Tapanya and Ayshe Talay-Ongan) in that book with colleagues. I've pursued with my interviewer daughter (and terrific colleague, Leslie Cameron) work on the children's developing sense of themselves in their humorous interactions with their caregivers. So there were just so many ways that we could explore these toddler girls and do an inter-, multidisciplinary multi -- it's a semi-naturalistic study, but we could use all kinds of techniques. And I found that very, very comfortable. And then subsequent to that we developed a team that is involved with doing a similar project using/adapting that methodology to work with resilient adolescents. And similarly I found working around the globe (with Sombat Tapanya in Thailand again, Linda Theron in South Africa, especially) that it's not Canada-centric, but that it can pick up the socialization experiences of at-risk youth who are sturdy/thriving, like our toddlers, and who can be part of the process of exploring their own experiences with us. So those two projects I find extremely rich, although also I still conduct

cross-cultural research in the comparison of Chinese and Canadian children in verbal deception -- this next leg of the NIH grant we hope will be talking about truth telling, not lie telling, and we'll be looking at how we know to trust other, or not. So those are three fine programs of research and I never give up my interest in emergent literacy, so those are sort of avenues that I'm very excited about pursuing right now.

L. Cameron: Okay. A couple more questions and I'll take a break.

C.A. Cameron: Okay.

L. Cameron: What published or unpublished manuscripts do you think best represent your thinking about child development?

C.A. Cameron: I think if we start earlier on probably I would say the work that I did with Anne Hunt and Murray Linton on emergent literacy, which reflects that longitudinal study. That was a high point for me.

L. Cameron: And that was published--

C.A. Cameron: In what journal? I can't quite remember. (*Educational Psychology Review*, 1996) -- An educational psych research journal, yes. So the '96 paper, and I would say the paper in 1999 called something like "Frog, Where Are You?" in *Discourse Processes* and a more recent one that we just published in 2009, which is connected to that, in *First Language*; the latter two are manipulations of telephone versus face-to-face communication on children's narratives, both oral and written expression. So here we are 15 years later and those follow-up pieces on recontextualization are, I feel, important.

L. Cameron: Do you feel it's also the most significant?

C.A. Cameron: Yes. I do, and I do even when they're not as highly cited as other works might be. Certainly our verbal deception work is more highly cited I think, but I think that the others have an influence on the field that is very important to me.

L. Cameron: Are there contributions that you made that you think are wrong headed now in retrospect?

C.A. Cameron: Wrong headed?

L. Cameron: You couldn't say you had any really big turns in your thinking, so maybe--

C.A. Cameron: No, they seem rather to build. I mean, I think some are smaller steps than others. I like my original experimental child work that was published in the *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*. I like the work that comes out in education when I think that it might have an impact on the educational community. I'm hoping that our new little book might have an impact on our understanding that around the globe children thrive, under very different circumstances, that it doesn't have to be how we in North America think that it should go, and I think that it may even build a methodological case to be even stronger when we're looking at resilient adolescents, revealing that what helps a teenager to thrive is very different depending on the context. And so yes, we're all basically human beings and we all develop emotional attachments in our various brilliant ways, and I just think kids' concept developments are so exciting and they all do all that wonderful stuff; but I think that the way that they do it is very different depending on the context in which they are socialized. We, in fact, impact on their socialization processes if even the children have great impacts on their own developmental processes. So cultural differences and similarities are still fascinating to me.

L. Cameron: Okay. So if you can think for a moment about your experience with funding, research funding over the years. What ways have you participated in shaping funding policy or implementation, that would be on study sections and so on, and securing support for your own work and that sort of thing?

C.A. Cameron: I've been very fortunate. I don't know why, but I have never not gotten a grant I wanted, and I've always got support for doing the work that I wanted to do. In the early years I don't think I published as much as I would have loved to have, if I had had more time to do it (AND raise my family). But my influence in funding: so we have a wonderful system of granting councils in Canada. I don't know if it's going to be destroyed in the next few years, but we have had a wonderful granting council in Canada, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. They've been very good to me ever since I was a graduate student. But having spent most of my life in a small institution, the University of New Brunswick, where I taught from 1973 until 1998, it's a small institution and I was on their adjudication panels over the years and I think that I worked extremely hard, and it wasn't always easy to advocate for: small is good, women are good, newcomers are good. And I think those are the three areas that, as a chair of a department, as an associate dean in graduate studies, and in the granting councils (and I was also on the board of directors of the Canadian Psychological Association), I think my emphasis on (and as I said, small, isolated institutions and promoting them because they are feeders into our system in Canada), so there are no bad small institutions in Canada from my point of view. And so being able to advocate against the University of Toronto, McGill, and UBC in making sure that there were adequate support for our smaller institutions, being sure that there wasn't prejudice against young -- especially young -- but women scholars and young scholars from the big guys -- not all big boys were bullies, but a lot were. And so I think that in my day as a professor going up through the ranks, I was an institutional player that I think I made some strong contributions to the development of our discipline here in Canada. I see great importance in the developmental mentor -- it's not just with young faculty colleagues, but with any vulnerable but worthy group.

L. Cameron: Okay. We'll stop here for a break.

(continuing)

L. Cameron: Okay, continuation of our interview of Catherine Ann Cameron. Can you tell us which institutions you worked in and the dates and in what capacities?

C.A. Cameron: Okay. Well, I really essentially worked in one institution my whole career. After doing my doctoral studies at the University of London in the UK I went to Dalhousie University where I was a postdoctoral fellow for one year. That's in Halifax, Nova Scotia in Canada. And then I went to the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, New Brunswick. I started out part time. I was a post doc one year and a part time faculty member for three years, up until 1973, which would be five years postdoctoral work. I took my first full-time position in '73. The part-time years counted toward tenure and promotion to Associate Professor in 1975, and from 1980 till 1998 I was a full professor at the University of New Brunswick.

During that time I was Director of Graduate Studies for the Psychology Department (1974 to 1978). I was Associate Dean in the Graduate School, responsible for the research of the humanities and the social sciences at the institution and liaison with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and the NSERC portion of the natural sciences and engineering research with respect to psychology, and was involved in the research and graduate studies functions of the institution for five years (from 1980 to 1985).

L. Cameron: Do you remember the dates of the graduate school?

C.A. Cameron: The graduate school was '80 to '85 and I was chair of the department '90 to '94. And then whenever it was at all possible I had sabbatical leaves in some exciting places like the University of British Columbia on several occasions, I was in Chiang Mai in Thailand, I was in Hangzhou in China,



and I was in Berkeley, California, and I was in London. So in the early years I took sabbatical leaves every seven years, but as time went on I took the leaves every three and a half years toward the end. And then I had administrative leaves as well, so I spent quite a bit of time away from the University of New Brunswick, which was always stimulating.

**L. Cameron:** And now you have an official capacity at the University of British Columbia?

C.A. Cameron: Yes. When I retired I retired early when I was 60 in 1998.

**L. Cameron:** We'll put retired in quotation marks.

C.A. Cameron: Yes, and I took an early retirement. It was an offer of the institution to many in my cohort and a very favorable one, so I chose then to spend full time on research, which I'd not previously been able to do, so I have had numerous grants and have worked full time at the University of British Columbia as an Honorary Professor in Psychology. But I was also awarded an Emerita professorship at the University of New Brunswick so I'm an Honorary Research Professor there and I'm also an adjunct professor at the University of Victoria in Victoria, Canada. So the three institutions I work with, I've worked sometimes with students, I've worked less frequently with supervising honors and doctoral students in the past few years, but I still supervise students in research in all three institutions.

**L. Cameron:** Okay. And the next question is--

C.A. Cameron: Doesn't make a lot of sense.

**L. Cameron:** --right.

C.A. Cameron: I think it's an American question really. I think that my major contribution, as I mentioned earlier, was my involvement with the granting council through my being -- in the granting councils in Canada -- through my work through the Graduate School of the University, through my being on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Psychological Association, where I was a Scientific Affairs Chair for three years. Also in the mid-'80s there was a developmental section of the Canadian Psychological Association and I was one of the founding members of that group and also was the coordinator of the group one year. It was a rotating chair that went through all us founding folks, so was always involved, because in Canada developmental psychology is divided amongst the granting councils. The basic process science is covered by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council covers the more social aspects of child development. So child development is split among those two councils, but also anything that was clinically oriented or applied through what's now CIHR, which is Canadian Institutes for Health Research, used to be MRC, the Medical Research Council. So in any case, psychology has three legs in three councils and that's sometimes a nightmare, sometimes a benefit. Some of us have had simultaneously grants in all councils, which none of the councils like and so those loopholes tend to be stopped up as much as possible. But one could have a lovely piece of research that has basic process interest, has the developmental interests of the social sciences, and also has health research implications. And so one could initially, if one were devious, apply to all three granting councils with the same proposal, which I, of course, would not advocate; but there are ways that one can do one's research and have the various legs solidly on the ground. And so I do think it's sad when they try to stop that up entirely, because there's a sense in which developmental psychology can slip through the cracks between all the agencies as well as double (or triple) dip. Anyway, you can see that I was pretty passionate about that when I was involved, and I think I made some contribution to setting up guidelines that wouldn't put us in double jeopardy, but would also allow us to go to the appropriate home when we had the appropriate research proposals. And as I said before, I've been generously supported over the years, so I think that that put me in a good position to argue vehemently for good treatment for developmentalists. And I do think that we have been well treated by and large.

L. Cameron: So you spent a lot of your teaching career at University of New Brunswick? Can you tell us about--

C.A. Cameron: My only teaching really.

L. Cameron: -- yes, your experience as a teacher, particularly of child development research and, probably closely related to that, the training of students as research workers?

C.A. Cameron: What we call highly qualified personnel in Canada. Yes, I like to think of psychology as a discipline that involves education, as well as training. And I would say that I probably go stronger to the education than the training aspect of it, and I think we'll have a chance to talk about this a little bit more later on, but I'm very concerned about the discipline moving more heavily towards the applied end of the spectrum and I feel that certainly at the undergraduate level we should be focusing on basic process training and education and that even in the early graduate school days it still should still be basic development that's most important; to do otherwise is something that I think shortchanges our students. So in the early years I really I thought when I was a teacher that I tried to give students a basic science background and really did not focus on the application of the science as heavily as I think nowadays my colleagues do.

At the graduate level I think as the training becomes more technical I think it's fair enough for us to be working towards putting our students into the field, not too early, but into the field of helping people. But I still believed right through my career as an educator that I wanted a psychologist to come out the other end a well rounded individual, an individual that had more than the technical aspects of the discipline. And I think I went a bit against the grain with that with some of my colleagues and also some of my students. But I think that the students who I did educate and train got a very broad and strong background and I certainly hear from them that it put them in good stead for their careers, whether they were academics or professionals.

L. Cameron: What courses did you teach?

C.A. Cameron: I taught child development as a starter; it started out as a course that was offered to 40 students and by the time I retired we were teaching several hundred students and in fairly large groups, which I found a little unfortunate, but I always had the largest number of teaching assistants (it was a writing-intensive course, recognized by the Arts Faculty as such) and we broke the students down into smaller groups and did activities within this as well, so I easily had a flank of graduate students helping me out. And so that would have been our bread and butter. Over the years I taught language development, which I really enjoyed. I taught a course called Experimental Child Psychology, which was essentially a lab course. It was a five-hours-a-week course where we had two, one and a half hour lectures and two lab hours. And students only got three credits for that, but they signed up in good numbers, not huge numbers, but I always had some very, very good students take that class. I taught cognitive development. I taught sex differences occasionally, but there were usually other colleagues who were keener than I to teach sex differences.

L. Cameron: Did you teach Introduction to Psychology??

C.A. Cameron: I taught Intro a couple of times but I hated teaching Intro. It was a huge, huge service course, and I'm not charismatic, and I found -- and particularly back in the bad old days, in 1973 -- students didn't have a lot of respect for women. And I found that they -- and I was young. I wasn't a heck of a lot older than they were, and I don't know. I taught it a couple of times, but I found it very, very hard. And the department was very kind to me. I didn't get rave ratings in it, but I got very good ratings in the developmental courses I was doing, and I argued as my numbers in the developmental course went up and up and up that I was teaching upwards to several hundred students there, and so that was what they thought was my service to the department. So I didn't teach it more than maybe three or four times and I really didn't miss not teaching it any more.

**L. Cameron: And the graduate seminar?**

C.A. Cameron: Oh yes, I started out as a post doc and I always had graduate seminars, and I loved them. That was where I think that I was happiest teaching. I would have fairly large groups for graduate seminars at our university and every now and then we'd have a bad session, or I'd have had bad lesson plans or something, but by and large I was fairly satisfied. In fact, I was very satisfied with my graduate teaching, and the graduating teaching always led me back to my research, and it was just always fun working with graduate students, and I still work with some of those graduate students, and I still work with some new honors students who I really also enjoy a great deal. So research students, working in the lab with students, and having that opportunity to mentor them and take them out to a Shakespeare play or other educational as well as boring activity from time to time and do things that sort of expanded their sense of who they were as human beings, as well as psychologists I think was important too -- had to have been important to me and still is.

**L. Cameron: I think you started to address this question already, but can you comment on the tension between teaching and research? And I'm not sure. There are different ways to understand that question, but the tension between teaching and research in the field of child development.**

C.A. Cameron: Right. I don't see a tension intellectually at all. I think that they are very, very deeply intertwined, that I can't imagine teaching psychology and not doing research as energetically as one does. However, I think that where the tension arises is in our academic life, having the requirement of having one third of one's time spent teaching, one third of one's time spent doing research and technically one third of one's time doing administrative work. And I think I generally did that and the tension that arose for me was a very practical one. It wasn't at all intellectual. It was only the tension of there are so many hours in the day and if you have four children that you're raising as a single parent where's the time left to get the writing done? But I was always very good at collecting data with the help and support of students and the grants that I had, but I found it very hard to set aside student demands on my time and attention and place it into the writing that I was required to do in order to get on with my research. So that's why I was saying that I spent every second I could on sabbaticals writing up the massive amounts of data that I was collecting while I was teaching. I could collect the data, but I didn't have a way of saying, "Sorry, I can't give you feedback on your paper, because I'm busy writing my own paper." It always seemed as if the students came first and so that was the only tension I felt. The intellectual tension; there was none. It seemed to me that, for me, being an academic meant dissemination in all its forms, be it research or teaching, it was all learning and disseminating that knowledge.

**L. Cameron: Okay. You've talked a little bit already about what I think might be considered some of the applied aspects of your research. But can you maybe say explicitly what in your experience is applied research -- applied here is in quotation marks, so -- and your role of putting theory into practice?**

C.A. Cameron: That's a really tough question and a very, very important question. It seems to me that if we don't do evidence-based application then we're not being scientists. But there is a gap between our knowledge acquisition and the potentials for application, which often involve policy constraints, political constraints, local constraints of all sorts and because we can't apply a piece of knowledge that we have today or tomorrow doesn't mean that piece of knowledge isn't worth applying, and if it's a good piece of knowledge it can be timeless. I guess I struggle with the clinical field because it seems to me that knowledge is always up for challenge and reinvestigation and testing. And I think that -- Increasingly over my career I found students, particularly graduate students, not so much undergraduate students, which may be one of the reasons I love even more sometimes teaching undergraduates, but I felt that graduate students really wanted formulae for going out into the field. They were more interested in clinical application than they were in basic science. And trying to find a way to teach students the basic science and its applicability without necessarily saying, "Well, this is what you can do with the children that you will encounter in a clinic, or a hospital setting or in your

practice," but rather to give more general ideas about how you would find out how to go about helping a particular child or a particular type of child I found very challenging. And I found that students were very keen, particularly the more senior they were, to want to talk about ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, and so on and so forth, and not really to think about what the basic processes were that were involved in giving some of the problems. They were not as interested in understanding process as they were in the application. And I guess I do struggle with that, and feel that I'm not so sure I was as effective a teacher as I wanted to be, although certainly the students that worked with me closely I felt we were on the same wavelength. But I didn't always feel that all of the students I was working with were respectful of the need for basic science.

L. Cameron: And I think, if I can ask a follow up, I think that one way that your research, and I think more recently -- well, not even more recently -- but I think about the work with the French immersion, the work with violence prevention, and then the work with even the recent *Day in the Life*, it all has application, not necessarily clinical application, but a sort of maybe educational application. I wonder if you might say something about that.

C.A. Cameron: It's almost like it comes closer sometimes -- what I see is my community psych people, like the community psych colleagues and my health psychology colleagues -- I think I speak a more common language than the clinical child people.

L. Cameron: But those are applied.

C.A. Cameron: Yes they're very much applied, very much applied.

L. Cameron: So I think your work does speak to those applied fields more than it does to clinical research, meaning that your work isn't applied or isn't that you don't think about the application, that you're thinking about a different kind of application than a clinical application.

C.A. Cameron: Right. And I do feel that those people who are really interested in policy are doing a fabulous job. It's not a job that I can do or I don't feel -- although there have been times, for instance, in the work that we did on dating violence where we actually did make policy recommendations and they were accepted by the provincial Department of Education and Health and Social Services. So there are times when I've had the opportunity to make policy recommendations that would stick. But there were other times when I did work like with the federal Department of Communications, Ottawa, Canada, which was very much a political situation where one could do absolutely wonderful work and while the liberals were in office -- and I might say that that's a prejudice of mine -- but when the liberals were in office we made progress, and then the next conservative party came into power, our progress was taken away. And that happened also with a rural child project where we made wonderful headway in finding ways of supporting young girls and women in violence prevention and the moment that the Tories came into power they cut the Status of Women branch, I mean they literally cut it out. So there are times when you do the good fight but there is a political world out there, one that I'm not very -- I don't think as an academic I can do as much political work as would need to be done to force issues on some matters that really are human rights issues. They're not, "Well, we'll take care of the girls and the boys can look after themselves," so I think that there are places where one has to back off and say the political context is not favorable right now, and so we'll just hold the line until a more favorable time. But I find that frustrating. I find the politics very frustrating, even though I'm interested in them and wish that we had better ways of dealing with them.

L. Cameron: The next few questions are about your experiences with SRCD. But when did you join SRCD?

C.A. Cameron: Yes, I joined SRCD in, I think it would have been 1964. I have, I think, all of the *Child Development* journals back to then. I was in London. I was doing doctoral studies and I think they cost me something like sixpence a volume for *Child Development*. It was incredibly inexpensive for a

student to become a student member back then. So when I enrolled as a doctoral student at the University of London I also took out an SRCD membership. And so I've been a member since then, but I've never been involved in any of the governance activities.

**L. Cameron: Okay. And what were some of the earliest contacts you had with the Society, with whom did you--**

C.A. Cameron: I didn't have any connections with Society people at all. I got the journals. I read them avidly. They were a part of my intellectual home. Over the years I've become I think quite disaffected by the fact that -- it took me a while to figure out that SRCD was an American organization, and doesn't speak very avidly, in my view, for other research contexts outside its own borders, so that its interests, like developmental psychology textbooks, which are largely American, focus on issues such as what's labeled as diversity in the United States is not the same kind of issue as it is in Canada. So our aboriginal issues are issues of bilingualism and colonialism, our social issues are not issues that are at all the same as American ones. And I've lived enough time in the States to know that for sure. So policy in Washington, DC has little to do with my policy concerns; our policy is very different, it's a different context. Health matters, mental health matters, educational matters, all the things that impact the children that I do research with are really quite different and I guess I do sometimes feel like my colleagues who come to Canada from the south of the border are not very sensitive to those differences. But basically over the years I've sometimes felt that, that SRCD, that had we our own SRCD in Canada that would help us to have an impact on what our political leaders do. We had a little bit of sway with the Canadian Psychological Association, but I do respect that SRCD works well for American developmentalists and we don't have such an agency, which is too bad.

**L. Cameron: Do you attend the biannual meetings?**

C.A. Cameron: I do.

**L. Cameron: When did you first go?**

C.A. Cameron: It would have been after my youngest child was six, so it would have had to have been in the late '70s or early 80s

**L. Cameron: Okay. And your participation in the scientific meetings or publications: so you go to the meetings, present research at meetings and publish in the Society journal?**

C.A. Cameron: Yes.

**L. Cameron: And any other non-governance aspects of the work of the Society are you involved--**

C.A. Cameron: Not really, no.

**L. Cameron: Okay. And you said a moment ago that you have had no role in the governance?**

C.A. Cameron: No.

**L. Cameron: Okay. We have a partial answer to the next question already, which is what you believe are the most important direction to occur in SRCD and its activities during the years of your association with it.**

C.A. Cameron: I used to think that it was very much an interdisciplinary group. I think that the ISSBD is a much more interdisciplinary but certainly a much more international group. And I enjoy the involvement with the International Society for Studies in Behavioral Development more than SRCD in some ways, because of its pan-national involvement. I like its conferences. I go to them at least as regularly as SRCD meetings. SRCD meetings are marvelous, but they are U.S.-oriented. And it does

mean that there's a kind of obliviousness to other perspectives. I think that there have been efforts to improve that, but I really do believe that when you're the king of the castle you don't have to pay attention to those around you and I think that it's very hard for citizens of the U.S. to take the rest of the world terribly seriously. I just think that it's a second, that we're esteemed -- particularly Canadians, who also think of themselves as second rate anyway -- I think that other citizens are seen to be second rate and I think that comes through in SRCD. It doesn't really offend me, but I feel more at home in an association that's truly an internationalist one. And I respect that SRCD is making efforts, but I think that is a big behemoth and it pays the price as well as having some benefits.

**L. Cameron:** Okay. So the last two questions are about the field more generally. So can you, thinking back now over the several decades that you've been in the field, comment on the history of the discipline, major continuities and discontinuities and events related to these?

C.A. Cameron: Yes, I think I would stick away from psychology in general, partly because I've been out of teaching psychology for a decade now and I don't think that I feel as knowledgeable of the discipline at large, but given that I've been doing research in development psychology over the last decade, do attend the conferences, do publish in the area I do feel that I can make a comment on developmental psych. And I love Jean Mandler's article on the death of developmental psychology. I don't think she's dying at all. I think that developmental psychology is one of those wonderful areas of psychology where all of the strands of psychology are alive and well. I don't think developmental psychology's going to die in the same way that I sometimes feel that psychology is at risk for being overtaken by neuroscience or whatever other trends are the taste of the day. I think that psychology is at some risk, but I think developmental psychology is tremendously strong and I love that about developmental psychology, that when I used to go to conferences that were broader than SRCD or ISSBD I would love to go to sessions learning about the basic processes, learning about clinical issues, right, the full spectrum, everything from micro to macro. And I think developmental psychology still has that in it so that if you do go to a developmental conference you just see the whole spectrum of the discipline. And I think it's doing very well. I think we've gone from being extremely behaviorist in my time, becoming experimental child psychology through to becoming more aware, not as aware as we could, but more aware of the social and neurological underpinnings. We've become more aware of the biological components, the genetic components, and so I think that we're very healthy. And I'm glad that I'm still doing developmental psychology, because I see it as one core area of psychology where you do have the basic science, you have the application, you have connections with real people where you can make real differences and you can be always learning new stuff. And you've got language, I mean, you've got so many areas, so I would say that with the changes come renewal or something, and that I don't think we've lost any of it. I think we've still got some areas of real mystery and that can be very, very helpful. I see that if I go to a school and watch the challenges of a young child or if I go into a home I can see developmental psychology having implications second by second over the course of the day and questions are continually arising. Developmental psychology is as great a field to be in, I think, today as it was 40 years ago.

**L. Cameron:** So have your views about what the important issues are in the field changed over your career?

C.A. Cameron: Not really, because I think that we still have so many questions, and I think that's what worries me most about the young scholars who want to go out and apply without questioning. I hold out for the fact that there are many ways to truth, many methodologies to be exploited. I reviewed 40 applications for the province of Nova Scotia just about a month ago and I have to say that the young scholars -- not the developmentalists -- but the young scholars in general were not as questioning as I would hope that they would be. I think there are still terrific questions out there to be asked and I really don't think we've got the world by the tail and I really don't think that, no matter how much cognitive behavioral therapy can do to help people, that the kids who are in prison, the teenagers who are in prisons who have very poor starts to life, who have not had an advocate -- thinking of my resilience work -- who have not had an advocate support them over their early years, and that cognitive behavioral therapy isn't going to get anywhere with those kids until their basic attachment

relationships have been worked through. And so the cortisol work that I do tells me so much about the fact that the set points that we would normally expect to have for good functioning, that when they get disrupted, we can't simply talk our way out of those challenges, that we've got to do other things and some of those things we don't know yet. We really don't know a lot about what a good attachment intervention would be or, in fact, what indeed for any individual is an effective attachment relationship. So there are so many questions and I guess I feel that those questions are always -- that as long as those questions are there we can't mindlessly apply formulae to how to intervene with people.

**L. Cameron:** So thinking big, and again, I think that's one you've touched on in various ways over the course of the interview, but what are your hopes and fears for the future of the field of child development?

C.A. Cameron: Well, I guess the biggest fear is the death of psychology broadly construed, because for me I think that it is the discipline that spans philosophy to biology and everything in between that we need to preserve. And I would feel really bad if the humanistic part of the discipline, OR the clinical part -- I guess it's a matter of whether or not parts of it become too fashionable and therefore we get tails wagging dogs, I think that is a potential problem. But I think that there's enough healthy self-correction within the system. I guess the main -- if I had an issue that's a concern to me, and I haven't brought it up, because it's a political issue, but for me the industrialization of the university is a major factor. And by that I mean that universities have become corporations, and they weren't when I started out. And that does mean that the numbers games, the business of big grants and big this, big that and accountability, that becomes inane. And I don't think we should be unaccountable, but I do think that the industrialization, or the commercialization or however you want to put what's happened to universities, has had a negative effect on psychology. Well, it has on all disciplines I'm sure. But I regret that part and I would like to think that we as a discipline can be expansive and respectful enough of other (sub)disciplines to keep our minds very widely open as to where we can go to look for answers to questions.

And I guess the positive thing is I think that we're doing better in doing interdisciplinary work and so we don't necessarily have to know everything there is to know about the HPA-axis to do work with colleagues who do know everything there is to know, and doing collaborative work I think is one way of keeping the discipline honest and expansive, because I wouldn't like psychology to compress into something that was so micro that we would stop asking some profoundly important human questions.

**L. Cameron:** So would your hope for the discipline be that it continues to be more interdisciplinary and continue to be--

C.A. Cameron: I would like to see it engaged in interdisciplinary discussions, but I'm almost implying that developmental psychology's interdisciplinary in that we've got everything from the micro to the macro within us. I would like to keep that in psychology, but then I would like also that all aspects of the discipline communicate with cognate areas connected with them that I guess it's open exchange and that's what I liked just about being in the Graduate School at UNB was that I was dealing with discussions with people across the whole spectrum of intellectual life. So I guess a concern for me would be to become too focused on micro issues.

**L. Cameron:** Okay. And the last question, which is a personal note, we've heard some of this already, but if you can tell us about your personal interests and your family, and especially the ways in which they have had a bearing on your scientific interests and contributions.

C.A. Cameron: Well, my family grew up with me. I started having a family when I was in my early, early 20s and so I grew up with my children. I learned by observing them, how many gaps we had in our understanding of children just by watching my own babies and then realizing the kinds of clever manipulations that we could do to learn a lot more. My children have been, I guess, my vocation, my avocation, my hobby, my life, and you know something about that. So when I was a young, single mom

with four kids and an academic career that was it, and as my family got older I guess I got more interested in older children as well. My favorite age is still three, but I seem to be able to tolerate 13-year-olds too. So my family life informed my academic life and I'm sure my academic life informed how I was as a parent and now as a grandparent. And I'm avidly interested in the development of my own children in their mid lives and in my own development in my older age and in the grandchildren. And I think that that has all been the same kind of mutually complementary processes that were involved in the teaching and the research. So I don't have a heck of a lot of life outside that. I don't have hobbies, no sports. I'm pretty much a psychologist morning, noon, and night.

L. Cameron: You do yoga.

C.A. Cameron: I practice yoga, but that's connected too. I mean, the tailbone is connected to the knee bone; yes, I like to do things, but I like to do them with my family. So I like to swim, but I like to swim with the grandchildren. I like to do the things that are connected with the other things I do or with my students. And so I'm having some difficulty deciding to retire. I thought at 72 I'd be satisfied to retire, but I don't seem to have done a very good job yet. We'll have to see the years out, because there are always good questions to ask and it's a little hard to do the empirical work that we need to understand the things that we want to understand if one doesn't have the kind of support that a granting council can give, and the students who stimulate my thinking twice about the questions I want to ask and how I want to try to answer them. I have fabulous students in Vancouver these days and I really enjoy that contact with young people, and I really enjoy collaborating with you in the *Day in the Life* work, and even just have a new opening with another one of my children to conduct an interdisciplinary seminar over the course of the next couple of years.

L. Cameron: I was going to just say that our collaboration together started with my daughter, your granddaughter as a research participant in a *Day in the Life* and then I think that's sort of a nice example of the way which your family life and research interests have come together. And that's certainly been a wonderful thing for me and I think will be for my daughter, your granddaughter as she grows up and reads the book and sees that connection.

C.A. Cameron: Yes, yes. And I think that that kind of richness I've had in many ways with students but it's all the more profound when it's with your own children certainly.

L. Cameron: Is there anything about that sort of contribution generally? It does ask a question about applied contributions. I'm not sure--

C.A. Cameron: No, I really don't think so. I mean, I would like though to say how grateful I am that you were prepared to do this interview with me. It has been hard, because we're both such busy people, to get this interview done. It's taken a couple of years to get to it, but it seemed to me that the person who could best ask those questions was a person who's been there since I was 26 and been a witness to all of what you asked about today, because I can remember when you were two you had a pile of papers under your arm and my mother, your grandmother, said, "Oh, and what are you doing?" And you said, "Well, I'm going to the university to do my thesis," and so you clearly were sort of right there from the very beginning of time.

L. Cameron: Well at least the last couple of decades. Well, it's been fun for me to hear and to see too though the ways in which we've had the experiences collaborating together, particularly in writing, that it often feels like we're writing with another one of ourselves, but it is interesting to hear that probably some of the ideas that I have about psychology that I thought that I came up with all by myself I probably got those from somewhere else.

C.A. Cameron: Well, we don't know though whether you got it from me or I got it from you. Well, thanks Leslie, for doing this.

L. Cameron: Thank you.