

## **Algea O. Harrison-Hale**

- Born February 14, 1936 in Winona, West Virginia
- B.S. in Education (1956) Bluefield State College, M.A. in Education (1959) University of Michigan, Ph.D. in Psychology and Education (1970) University of Michigan

### **Major Employment**

- Assistant, Associate, and Full Professor; Department of Psychology, Oakland University: 1970-present
- Teacher, Detroit Public School System: 1956-1962



### **Major Areas of Work**

- Ethnic socialization, Black psychology, Cognitive development

### **SRCD Affiliation**

- Chair of the Committee on Minority Participation (1977-81), Steering Committee of the Black Caucus (1977-80), Chair of the Local Arrangements Committee (1981-83), Program Committee (1981-83, 1987-89), International Committee (1993-97), *Child Development* Editorial Board (1983-86)

## **SRCD ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW**

### **Algea O. Harrison-Hale**

Interviewed by Lori Boughner & Cynthia Schellenbach  
At Oakland University  
May 21, 1998

**Boughner:** Algea Othella Harrison-Hale being interviewed by Lori Boughner on May 21, 1998, on the campus of Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, in the Pryale Hall Conference Room.

**General intellectual history:** describe your family background along with any childhood and adolescent experiences that may be of interest. Include the educational and occupational characteristics of your parents. Where were you born, grew up, what was your schooling like? Any military experience? Early work experience?

Harrison-Hale: I was born to Harriet and John Hobart Hale in Winona, West Virginia, which was a small coal mining company camp. My family moved to Boomer, West Virginia, when my father got a job at the local plant. My mother had two years of college before she married my dad. My father had four years of college; however, because he was a black male at the turn of the century, he could not get employment in West Virginia using his degree. He had to work in the coal mines and the plant along with other whites and blacks who did not finish high school although he had a college education. Boomer, West Virginia, is a small town located between two mountains in West Virginia and is what is known as a hollow. There was segregated housing in the area where I grew up in parts of Boomer because the company built the company houses. The furthest back up in the hollow were the black houses. There were 26 houses, then you had the ball field and the parking lot, then you had the small houses for unskilled white laborers. You had two story houses for semi-skilled white laborers and the white middle class management lived in another area all together. The other major ethnic groups were white and Italian. A lot of the Italians were recent immigrants. So, although it was segregated housing, the children all played together because there was one ball field and one parking lot. Because the children had to take turns playing on the ball field eventually they just said, "I'm not going to wait I'll play with you." So it just got so the kids all played together although the housing was segregated. For me it was very, very free because the blacks were at the furthest end of the hollow

and it was a very protective setting with about a hundred children and with the ball diamond and the parking lot. There was a community rule that you did not go south or past the ball diamond. Anything other than that, up into the hollow and et cetera, you were free to go. So I basically grew up without immediate adult supervision during playtime. After it got dark adults supervised or we had to go in. So my playgrounds were the hills; I swang on vines in the trees and I drank from the streams and ate from neighbors gardens. I was really free to explore the birds and the plants, the berries, the butterflies, wherever the trails would lead us. The children in my age group we would go off in twos and threes and fours and just spend the day exploring and living on our own, coming home in time for dinner.

My father was a community activist. He worked in the plant as I said with everyone else, but he was a community activist. The community was organized around the church which was a very strong social group and the school. My father would organize the Boy Scout teams or he would organized the softball teams or whatever it was. If someone died he would organized the money to help bury them, whatever had to be done. He was seen as a pillar of the community. My mother did not work outside the home, however she did take in sewing and she would be, in today's language, an entrepreneur. She had majored in home economics and she had quite an extensive clientele for her sewing and she did quilting, so all of her money was used to buy extras for us. She was an excellent sewer so we always were dressed very nicely because she was able to make our clothes for us.

I had an extended family: my grandmother on my father's side, my father had two sisters who were career women. They were married women but they had careers and they did not have children. They chose not to have children but they focused their efforts all on us, which were their brother's children, there was four of us. So we basically had my grandmother, my grandfather, my two aunts, my two uncles, and my mother and my father. Nine adults focusing on four children, and so I grew up feeling very loved and very cared for. Whatever I needed that my parents could not provide materially my aunts and uncles provided and they were always there in terms of every program, everything we did they always showed up in the audience. So I grew up in an extended family on my dad's side. On my mother's side there was her sister and a husband and four children and each child had a playmate or a cousin to play with, so I grew up with those cousins living close by. So every Sunday we would either go see someone on my father's side or go see my mother's sister. So I grew up in an extended family setting.

I started school when I was four years old. As I said it was a very informal situation, and they had the schoolhouse and my sister who was 17 months older went to school and I kept following her to school and staying and the teacher didn't put me out. She was just a very, very special first-grade teacher, one of those kind you thought was an ideal teacher to encourage someone to love learning. She never discouraged me, so she'd have me play in the sand box. So I'd play in the sand box but I kept yelling out the answers to the math problems, so then she would have me join the math group. She had a carpenter in the community make chairs for the reading groups and so when she called the children to come up to read I would run and jump into one of the chairs. So she had to let me stay. My mother had taught me to read so by the time I went to school at four I was already reading and doing math. She and my father both felt that their education should be used to further us, the children. My father felt that raising children was too big of a job for a woman, that the main child rearing should be done by the father, and so he was the provider and child rearer, and that my mother should assist him and she never objected to that role. So there was a lot of emphasis put on learning. He says the reason I was so smart was because she read to me while she was pregnant. So he knew that I was going to turn out so smart, in fact, that all of us would turn out smart. Well, we all do have graduate degrees. So I started to school, the teacher kept me. She encouraged me to learn more and, as a result, I finished high school when I was 15 it was very early. I found learning during the beginning years very exciting but not when I went to high school. I was very young when I went to high school. I found learning boring. I was so excited about all the social activities. I was a majorette, I was a cheerleader and we had sleepovers. Everyone was bused in so the time together was very important, and I would take the school bus home to visit friends and visit my aunts for the weekend which gave my mother a break with the children gone for the weekend. But I found everything about learning boring. I wasn't accepted as

a romantic figure at that time, I was viewed more as a mascot because I could understand the football, I could understand the basketball, I was a cheerleader. It wasn't until I was in my junior or senior year that I got into any type of heterosexual type of relationships. But I really still wasn't that interested, but it was fun. Everything was fun and I didn't study, I just was not interested in it, it was boring. I was sickly also because I had a lot of allergies and we lived down between the mountains, so one year I had to stay in a lot because I was so sickly I couldn't go out to play and I couldn't go out to the activities and then I started studying and I made As. I realized that I could study and if I studied I could do well in school. Then my—I guess in my senior year they initiated a project of giving a group IQ test to everyone. The school system was segregated and it was the black school system, and so they initiated a testing program and I tested very high, I was above average. This was a surprise to everyone because I wasn't studying, I wasn't producing. Then I realized, oh, maybe I could be able to study and do something, especially since my parents just assumed we were going off to college; it wasn't a choice we were just brought up with the idea we were going to college to do something. So I figured if I was that smart I should study to get my Ph.D. So when I told everyone after the exam that I was going to study to get my Ph.D. since I was smart enough they began to call me Doc. So that's when I began to have educational aspirations. I stayed out of school a year because my parents didn't have money to send my sister and I to college. I stayed out and I worked babysitting for a white school teacher couple and they had me do a lot of reading to their child, and they were the ones also that encouraged me to be a teacher. I had worked also since I was 12 delivering the black weekly newspaper. My dad told my brother to start the newspaper route but he lost interest in it and so I picked it up then and I delivered papers from the time I was 12, then I began babysitting and then, when I stayed out the year before I went off to college, I was babysitting.

I was also 12 years old when I started organizing groups for the community. At the age of 12 I felt that there were no activities in the community for young people, so I decided to organize some. So I organized the children who were younger than I was, which were around six and seven years of age, and I taught them how to be a majorette since I was a majorette. So I taught them baton twirling and dance routines to records—records were just coming out. They performed all over the area. The parents of those children made them little majorette outfits and they were very cooperative in letting the children come to practice and to just about any little social gathering for two years, my junior/senior year and the year I stayed out of college. So for three years we performed at the local affairs in the community and, as a result of that activity, one of the parents in the community gave my name to be one of the teenagers of the month of something for the statewide white newspaper. So the taking of the pictures of myself and the group was quite a big event in the community and just about everyone came. Today I have pictures of that particular group performing, so do all the families in Boomer. Needless to say, the youngsters are old now. But I was very active in organizing religious groups in the church, belonging to state organizations, and really was in a very interesting life for my first years, but book learning was not a regular routine in my life. It wasn't something that enthralled me yet. The activities or the active part of life were the things that engaged me the most. It wasn't until I went away to college that I became interested in formal learning.

**Boughner: What early adult experiences were important to your intellectual development? Collegial experiences?**

Harrison-Hale: The experiences that I had in my early adult years that were most important—I guess those that happened when I went away to college. Needless to say, I had to work my way through school and my father, because he knew the dean, had gotten me a work experience job in the library and that was the first time I was just exposed to so many books. I realized it was just so much information that I had not been exposed to. That there was a whole world that I could not afford to go to but in which I could enter by reading the books. I, much to the chagrin of the librarian—I mean, she would send me into the stacks to find something on a topic and I would get lost in reading the information, and it was like I was constantly discovering more and more information and go to other books. She really complained about me all the time because she said, “I sent you to get the information, not read it when you were there.” But by the time I finished college she was one of my strongest supporters for going away to graduate school because she felt that I did have the interest and

the motivation to be successful. I realized in that experience that I really truly wanted to be a part of academia. I just didn't know how I was going to enter into this world of the intellect but somehow I knew I was going to be there.

**Schellenbach:** This is Cynthia Schellenbach, current president-elect of Division 37 of the American Psychological Association. I will be asking the interview questions from this point forward. The third question is what are the origins of your interests in child development? What individuals were important to your intellectual development? Who were your research mentors, significant colleagues?

Harrison-Hale: The origins of my interest in child development were very closely tied to my experiences as a first- and second-grade teacher in the city of Detroit. After I finished college in West Virginia I came to Detroit looking for a job teaching and I got a job in an inner-city school, and the thing that impressed me most about my experiences was the variations in cognitive abilities of the children. I just couldn't understand what would account for the differences that I got. It wasn't necessarily the family context because a lot of them came from very poor families but they did very well and some came from very nice families and they did not do so well. And there was a difference in how they responded to me in terms of my attempts to motivate them. So I would say that generally my interest in children was the experiences I had working with first- and second-grade children.

There have been a number of people who were influential in my intellectual development. One was, when I was working on my master's degree in the evenings after teaching in the day I was in the class of Professor Eriksen, Visiting Professor at University of Michigan from Vanderbilt University, and this was in the late 1950s, and he was so impressed with me that he wanted me to go with him to Vanderbilt to integrate the psychology department. This was in the era when black students were integrating universities and he felt I had the ability to integrate Vanderbilt University. At the time I was married and then I became pregnant, so I just couldn't consider that, but just the fact that he thought that I had the ability to succeed in a Ph.D. program was very important. Another mentor was Lorraine Nadelman, she was a professor, also, in my master's program and since I had married and wanted to have a family I really didn't see how I could combine those two interests in my life, but Lorraine Nadelman was a role model for a woman who had a career and was devoted to her family and her children. So she was my major professor for my dissertation and she is an excellent detailed researcher and she's quite compulsive. Now she always says that I'm more compulsive than she is but she was very compulsive and she paid a lot of attention to detail and made certain that you had empirical documentations or a source for every comment that you made. So she really was a great influence. The other person was Harriett McAdoo. Professor Lorraine Nadelman introduced the two of us. We were both going to the University of Michigan and we were in her classes and she thought we should get to know one another because we were going down the same pathway in life. Today it is quite common for woman to have careers and combine careers and family life but in the days when I was coming through it was not that common and you receive a lot of negative comments, and just about all of my friends that I had from the era when I was just a wife or a school teacher were really not very supportive of my efforts to get a Ph.D., but here was a person in my age group who was going down the same pathways and we have been friends ever since. Also, John Hagen was an influential person in my life. I used one of his instruments that he had made in his dissertation for my dissertation. He came to the University of Michigan when he was in his 20s. He didn't have any gray hair and he was one of my major professors and we have remained friends ever since. One of the things that I learned from John was how to focus on a task because John is just—I mean bombs could drop on either side of him and he would stay focused on the task at hand! After my years in school the colleague that I think stands out the most is Mary Ainsworth. She was the president of SRCD at the time when minorities, and African Americans specifically, felt left out of the whole process. And I was chair of the Committee on Minority Participation and Mary was the president-elect and president of SRCD, and she was a tremendous role model and she exemplified what it is mentors should do and their role in the whole process at the professional field.

**Schellenbach:** What political and social events have influenced your research in writing, teaching?

Harrison-Hale: The political events that influenced me most were the Civil Rights Movement and, from there, the Black Power Movement which followed closely after that. As I said I was in the era of the Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King, the efforts to integrate and the back lash which followed, and especially quoting social science literature as proof of deficiencies among blacks. So in that particular era of social events some of us at the University of Michigan began conferences on empirical research in black psychology and our goal was to use the tools of psychology to explain or to describe the black experience and to illustrate that different experiences did not mean deviancy and, even though the mainstream literature in psychology had labeled African Americans as such, it was not our experience and it was not our interpretation of those experiences, that we felt that being black in American impacted the developmental trajectory of persons and we wanted to illustrate how this was done. So we had a tremendous impact on the field of psychology and related fields—I mean fields related to psychology like sociology and anthropology—by the conferences that we had, and those would be highly competitive and you would come to those conferences and have your major work critiqued in an atmosphere of acceptance and support and the person would receive feedback to get their papers ready for publication or for grants. So it was a pooling of knowledge and a sharing of knowledge to advance the field of black psychology. A lot of my work was geared towards doing research on variables that were very important for defining the black experience because it was the big question of what variables do you study that indicate where and how being black makes a difference in your development. That was a question that engaged a lot of us during that particular time. Also, I was the mother of two children. I worked in the suburbs that were north of Detroit and to keep from having to travel so far from the city to where I worked I moved into the suburbs and I really, as a developmental psychologist, became acutely aware as to how race differentially impacts development. There were experiences that my children did not have, like in high school dating their peers in high school, attending proms, how they were treated by the teachers, the judgment by people in authority positions just because they saw a black child. Then, of course, I had mothers saying, “Oh your child is black so they are going to be able to get into the best programs.” So the perception among white middle class parents who were friends of mine was that my children would have everything open to them because they were black, but my children were suffering daily from being black in those schools so that, of course, made an impact on me in terms of looking at the social science literature and the questions that we examined.

**Schellenbach: What were your primary interests in child development at the beginning of your career?**

Harrison-Hale: As I mentioned earlier my primary interest at the beginning of my career was cognitive development. I did my dissertation in that area and I published the article in *Child Development*. I also did some more work in that area that was published in a book about black psychology. Other than those two projects, my interest shifted.

**Schellenbach: What continuities in your work are most significant?**

Harrison-Hale: The continuity in my work is in my examination and exploration of the context of development for African American children. I have shifted in two ways. I did my research in the earlier years of my career on elementary children and preschoolers. I now have shifted to looking at adolescence as the age group whose development I’m examining. What was responsible for that shift was attending SRCD conferences and being very involved with the literature that was being published. There was a lot of emphasis on the adolescent period as a time of development where the major domains were undergoing change and, therefore, investigations of those changes would be enlightening in terms of developmental trajectories. So it was the attendance of professional conferences. The other shift that has occurred is that I have become interested in doing cross-cultural research, especially research in Africa. One of the questions that we were constantly confronted with as we did our work as African Americans and we always referred to was the African heritage and the continuities from the African continent to some of the practices that you see among African American parents and what you observe in African American families, for example the extended family. Well, now that’s

pretty accepted but in the earlier years when you talked about a family structure other than the traditional nuclear family it was viewed as deviant, and the question for us was, of course, was that extended families were part of the African heritage and I think it was an irritant to me also that as much as we know about psychology and about how the mind works and about scripts of life that it was just assumed that the middle passage erased everything that all Africans were bringing with them to the new world. There were thousands, in fact, millions of Africans brought and their assumption was that they didn't have any heritage or any scripts or any roles or any way of relating to one another and to their external world because it was all erased in the middle passage. So the challenge for me was to investigate what has been perceived as part of the African heritage that impacted development, and one of the things that impacts development, of course, that hasn't been well documented is the extended family structure. So I had a Fulbright to go to Africa and I did my research in the rural areas of Africa where the traditions of extended family living are very strong. What events impacted that shift was, of course, the discussions in empirical conferences in black psychology and the dialog with my other African American colleagues, formal and informal, and the campuses became more pan-African. We began to get African scholars and their input was interesting.

Another shift that occurred was that I began to look at other oppressed groups, Hispanics and Native Americans. The event that was responsible for that was I was a senior author on an article about the ecology of minority children and I worked with senior scholars that were Hispanics and Native American and Asian in terms of defining their experiences. Raymond Buriel, who was at Claremont in California, had a tremendous impact on me in terms of looking at the Hispanic culture. One of the things we were trying to develop was a consensus around what were the commonalities of the experiences of minorities with their host cultures. So working with those senior colleagues was influential in terms of making me shift in my work and now I'm currently looking at Hispanics in the metropolitan area of Detroit along with African Americans in my current research. Another event that was very important was attending the European Conference on Developmental Psychology. I mean that was such an enlightening experience to sit down next to developmental psychologists from around the world and then talk about what it is that we had in common and what it was that ethnic minorities in their cultures, you know, their experiences. And then of course I started attending ISSBD, which is an international society, and developing good relationships. So I'm terribly, terribly excited about that to have an international or cross-cultural focus in my work.

**Schellenbach: Please reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of your research and theoretical contributions, the impact of your work, and its current status.**

Harrison-Hale: The strength of my research is very difficult for me to talk about because I have always been very modest about my work, but I think the strength is the empirical approach I have used to the topics of interest to me. When I have a topic of interest I formulate a question and I conduct empirical research to try to get at the answers. Another strength is the clarity of my writing and how well I document my statements. The contributions that I've made are in the area of study known as black psychology. I was very involved in establishing a body of work so that current researchers who are interested in topics of ethnicity have a source and a body of work to go to. I think I was very influential in helping establish the work by my own research and by my efforts through the empirical research in black psychology conferences.

The impact of my work has been, I think, in the area of looking at the connections between African experiences and African American experiences and in terms of defining how the extended family impacts development. I think I am saying that because it's the most recent thing that I have done, but I think my contributions have been modest overall but I think they have been significant in a specific area and I think I have added to understanding the whole overall issue of development among children and adolescence. My current status is that I'm currently looking at social support which would be a variable that would emerge from looking at extended families in terms of social networks, and that's what I am currently working on and how it relates to ethnic socialization and African Americans and Hispanic Americans and Euro-Americans. I'm also, as I said before, developing a network with

international scholars and I think that would lead to some additional cross-national work on my behalf and some additional writing with those persons.

The weaknesses of my work have been that I did not have major funding to explore in depth any of the topics that I was interested in. I just did not have the infrastructure at the institution, which was a small institution; it was a liberal arts institution. I did not have mentors when I started in this department. There was no senior person that was active in any of the professional organizations or publishing and presenting so I was more or less carving that turf myself. There was a lot of resentment and lack of support. It was difficult for me to even get anyone to cover my classes when I went away to conferences and of course without that infrastructure support it is very difficult to get major funding for any grant. I did not have in the immediate area a large African American population so I had to travel so far to try to get to the population, at least an hour and a half to 45 minutes from the institution, and then try to get back to teach my classes, so it was very, very difficult in terms of the institution I found myself in and the topic of interest. Also I was the first and only black in the psychology department and that in itself produced a host of problems. I'm stuck in the middle of a very white conservative county and I have not had the support for my topic of interest. Whenever I talk about it with my colleagues, they would talk about how I always had to have a white middle class comparison group, that the topics were irrelevant, I mean on and on and on, and you get the picture, from the 1970s up to the 1990s. So I guess one of the good parts of that is that it made me become very active at SCRCD so that I could find people of like minds who had the same attitudes I did towards what professional academician did with their life. So it made my attachments and my attempts to develop relationships with members of SCRCD very fruitful. One of the reasons I could not leave the institution was because of personal and family difficulties and commitments, so even though I was dissatisfied with the institution there wasn't any way that I could basically leave the area and go somewhere else. I did that, as you will see, as the children got older. I began to go away for visiting professorships and et cetera, but because of personal reasons I had to take the lemon that I was given in terms of where my professional career was located and make the best of it. That produced weaknesses of course in my work.

**Schellenbach: Please reflect on your experiences with the research funding apparatus over the years. Comment on your participation in shaping research policy implementation. For example, study sections or councils, securing support for your own work, and related matters.**

Harrison-Hale: As I said earlier, I was in a small university with a grants office that was not very active, but I was able to find small sums to finance my work. I have participated in reviewing grant applications and on review committees. My impressions always of the whole funding apparatus is that it is very incestuous. Large universities get more funds and I think this is a way that the governmental structure issues merit to major institutions for what they are doing through funding huge research projects for them. But it just gets to be very circular because large universities produce a lot of students, students get on these review committees as they become senior scholars, even if it is a blind review they are very acquainted with the field and people who are doing certain kinds of work or have certain styles in methodology that are easily recognized or that they favor and so the funding continues. Now, there were two attempts to alter this cycle. One was the small grants and the minorities grants and, of course, those minority grants—that whole office was shut down in the sake of “creating a level playing field” but when it was in existence those who were not doing the traditional topics and who were interested in minority children did have a source of funds for their work. It was very, very competitive because it was just a small pot of money and it was very competitive, but at least you had somewhere where that the review committee would be interested in your topics. I'm just amazed when I would sit on those review committees just how people assume they are being objective and blind and yet how it's very, very incestuous. Of course, I think that's probably the way it goes in life in America, but it seems to me that as a field one of the things we should do is to be in the vanguard of change and I don't think the field has really done that much in funding. It's a big problem. Some people are just over funded for the quality of work that comes out and for the publications that come out of their institutions, and those that are very rigid in their thinking about the scientific methodology usually are on those review committees and they are just not flexible in what they are

doing. And I think this is one of the reasons that a lot of the misunderstandings about minority children were perpetuated in previous years and it's just something that, I think, as a field we need to be aware of and to keep trying innovative approaches to distributing research funds among different researchers other than your large traditional research institutions.

**Schellenbach: In which institutions have you worked? Dates, capacities.**

Harrison-Hale: I obtained my Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1970 and I joined Oakland University's Department of Psychology in 1970 and basically I have been here ever since. I have had a number of appointments as visiting professor and scholar. In the winter of 1987 I was at the Department of Psychology at the University of Virgin Islands. In winter and spring and winter and summer of 1988, '89, and '90 I was at the Department of Psychology at the University of California, UCLA. In 1990 for the winter and summer semesters I had a Fulbright Award to the University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Africa. In 1991 I was a visiting scholar at the Department of Education, Nanjing University, Nanjing, Peoples Republic of China. In 1993, spring, I was a visiting professor at the Division of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana, and the winter of 1995 I was a visiting scholar at the Department of Psychology, the Free University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Those experiences were invaluable in terms of the friendships that I formed and also the collaboration with other scholars.

**Schellenbach: Describe your experiences as a teacher of child development research and/or a trainer of research workers. What courses have you thought? Please comment on the tension between teaching and research in the field of child development.**

Harrison-Hale: I have taught mainly at an undergraduate institution. We did have a graduate program in applied developmental psychology and I did work with students getting an applied master's in developmental psychology. I think the program was ahead of its time in the 1970s and dissolved in the 1980s but now, in the late 1990s, we see that we are having applied developmental centers being established. The graduate students were working in applied settings but they had to do a thesis in their program. They really weren't interested in doing research so it was sort of conflictual for them. So my experiences since then have been mainly working with undergraduate students and trying to train them to do research, and it's been a very engaging experience and I think the students that I have worked with that come out of our department are well prepared for graduate research because they have had a lot of experience in designing, collecting data, designing research, data reduction, writing out papers, presenting. We have a series of conferences called Meetings of the Mind where undergraduates from three local universities present their student research projects and that's been very fruitful for the students. They have attended professional conferences like SRCD and APA, so as a result of not having a graduate program a lot of emphasis is placed on undergraduates having experiences in collecting research which really, I think, make them attractive candidates for Ph.D. programs. Those students here usually do not have difficulty in getting into their programs of choice at two tier-second tier universities. I enjoy teaching. I've taught child development, life span development, introduction to psychology, and socialization in the family. Those are the primary courses that I teach. I like teaching intro because I introduce the field of psychology and I think I get them excited about what it is that psychologists do and the importance of research. I don't experience the tension between training and research because currently it is being encouraged by our dean and by the administration, so we don't get the tension that they do at some universities between teaching and research. I incorporate research so much into my teaching and students seek me out who want the research experience.

**Schellenbach: What published or unpublished manuscripts best represent your thinking about child development? Which of your studies seem more significant? Which contributions the most wrong-headed?**

Harrison-Hale: There are two published manuscripts that I think represent my best thinking because they are expressions of the issues that I have focused or centered my career around. One was the



chapter that I did with Felicisima Serafica and Harriett McAdoo, "Ethnic Families of Color." Ross Parke edited the volume *The Family, Review of Child Development Research* in 1984. That represented, I think, my best thinkings at that time on the context of development for minority children. I again did a review article, this time it was published in *Child Development* in 1990 and it was "Family Ecologies of Ethnic Minority Children," and my co-authors were Pine, Wilson, Chan, and Buriel. Why I think the later article is significant is because it is one of the first attempts in the literature in which people who were indigenous to the cultures came together and wrote on a description of the literature in their area which made them, of course, extra sensitive to the interpretations and the implications of the social science literature. Since then, of course, there are a number of articles where people of the culture write about their culture, but I thought that that was one of the most significant things that I had done. The other significant thing that I think that I did was in my research in Africa on extended families, and it gives a description of how extended families impact adolescence and subsequently shape development. One of the things I showed was that intimacy, the availability of people to share intimate thoughts with, and affection, someone holding you in good regard, are very important for development and that's what adolescents perceive themselves as getting from their social networks.

What has been wrong-headed? I'm so cautious that I don't think that there has been anything that was wrong-headed about because I'm very cautious in my work.

**Schellenbach: Describe your experiences in so called applied child development research and applied work. Please comment on your role in putting theory into practice.**

Harrison-Hale: My experiences in applied research have been in terms of being a consultant to child care agencies, PTA organizations, and legislators. This is in an unpaid capacity. I have always combined my volunteer work with my professional work because I had the strong feeling that I received so many grants from tax payers to get my education that I had an obligation to give some of it back to the community free. So I was always a willing speaker at PTA, at parent workshops, at agencies that dealt with parenting and I've contributed a lot of time to working with legislatures to formulate policy that impacted children and families. So I think my role, and I think I'm very good at it, has been translating social science findings into nonscientific language and discussing the practical implications of those findings with nonprofessionals and I think I do a very good job at that.

**Schellenbach: When did you join SRCD? What were your earliest contacts with the Society and with whom? Describe the first biennial meeting you attended.**

Harrison-Hale: I joined SRCD in 1971. I received my degree from the University of Michigan in 1970. My mentors, Lorraine Nadelman and John Hagen, mentioned that I should join SRCD because it was a major professional organization in the field, and I took their advice and I attended the first biennial meeting in 1971. I think it was in Philadelphia, but I was so impressed with seeing and hearing and being able to discuss issues with the people that I had read about in my textbook. All the major developmental psychologists were there. The meeting was small, it was very informal and people were friendly so I could go up to John Flavell and talk about Piaget's theory because I was just enthralled with Piaget's theory. He discussed issues with me that concerned me. I was terribly, terribly impressed and felt that I had to become a part of this organization and I did. I joined and I've been very active in SRCD ever since.

**Schellenbach: Describe the history of your participation in the scientific meetings and publications of the Society and other non-government aspects of the work of the Society.**

Harrison-Hale: I had been an active participant in the scientific meetings and the publications of the Society. Very seldom have I missed—probably if I think about it I can count just one or two meeting. I think the one in Baltimore is the only—and when I was on sabbatical out of the country are the only meetings that I have missed from SRCD. It's a gathering of people of like minds, of people that are supportive, people that are presenting the latest in my field of interesting work. I enjoy it and I look forward to it every other year, you know, I come back to my work rejuvenated and ready to engage in

another research project. My interactions there have been very fruitful and have helped me a lot in my work because when I have questions or whatever I can always ask someone at one of the meetings. I have presented papers, posters, I've served as a discussant at conferences. The coming meeting in 1999 is the first time that I have organized a symposium, an international symposium, and I'm terribly excited about it. It's of international researchers and working on ethnic minorities and their respective cultures and the ethnic identification and I'm terribly, terribly excited. This is the first time that I have organized a symposium. I have been a reviewer of abstracts for the meetings in 1977, '79, '81, '87, '89, '91, and '97 so I have been very active in the meetings. I have published in *Child Development*. I was terribly excited because my master's thesis was published in *Child Development* and with a journal that has an 80 percent rejection rate for a new researcher that was quite an accomplishment. I always say that after that my career went downhill, but my master's thesis was published there. And I have published, as I said before, a couple of articles in there. I have also served on the editorial board for the *Child Development* journal and I am always at least reviewing articles. Every year I review at least one or two articles for the *Child Development* journal. Specifically I was on the editorial board of *Child Development* from 1983 to 1986.

**Schellenbach: Describe the history of your participation in SRCD governance. What were the major problems and issues that confronted you during your time as editor, as council member, as president, or other officer?**

Harrison-Hale: I came in contact with the governance structure of SRCD through—and I think it was in Denver of 1973—through an effort by black researchers to get the organization to be more sensitive to the consequences of some of the things that they were saying about black children to the lack of participation in the governance and the publication and et cetera of black members. So we had an informal meeting and Arthur Mathis and I were selected to go and approach the current president, president-elect, and the executive director regarding our concerns. So we met at the last minute on a Sunday morning, I think, just when the conference was about the end and we met with Dorothy Eichorn, and I can't remember who the president and president-elect were at that time, but we stated and outlined our concerns and—I know the president-elect was going to be Mary Ainsworth—and we met and expressed our concerns and that started my participation in SRCD governance. Lee Lee and Yvonne Heras were appointed to a Committee on Minority Participation. The charge of the Governing Council to the committee was to find ways to increase the participation of minorities in all aspects of the Society, so I attended my first Governing Council meeting with Lee Lee. We gave a report to the Governing Council regarding what we considered to be important steps to be taken by SRCD. That began a dialog with Mary Ainsworth, she wrote me a couple of letters and I responded to her and those letters to me are priceless. I think during that time she was the president and president-elect set the framework for the inclusion of minorities in all aspects of SRCD that I think goes under appreciated and unrecognized often by, especially, young scholars who were just accepting the fact that the SRCD meeting is sort of an adventure in multiculturalism. It was not always like that in the years of the early 1970s, it was just not like that and it took the effort of a lot of people working to ensure that this occurred. Dorothy Eichorn as an executive director worked diligently at the task. John Hagen, he has also worked very hard at this issue, but Mary Ainsworth I think really set the ideology, the ideological tone for it, if there is such a thing, for what was to occur and what was important for the Society to recognize as their responsibility the professional socialization of the young minority researcher, because a lot of the young minorities had come from programs where they didn't have good mentoring in those days and they didn't have people who were interested in their research because a lot of the research topics were on African American children and people were not available at their local institutions to advise them and to take them in and to help them get funding and to review their proposals and et cetera. And Mary Ainsworth said, well, this should be one of the functions of SRCD and now I'm just absolutely amazed at how well the organization does this.

I participated at a number of levels at SRCD. I was the liaison person to the Governing Council from the Black Caucus because the black members of the organization had organized, and I functioned in that role from 1974 to 1976. As I said, the council established the Committee on Minority Participation and I was first chair of that committee and that was in 1977 to 1981. In 1981 I was the chair of the Local

Arrangement Committee for the biennial meeting which occurred in Detroit and John Hagen was the chair of the Program Committee, and that was in 1981 and 1983, and that was quite an experience. Then I was a member of the program for the biennial meeting in 1987 to 1989 and then I was a member of the International Committee from 1993 to 1997. So I have been very active in the governance for SRCD.

One of the things that impressed me most when I went to my first meeting of the Governing Council and I had to give a report was how these major figures in the field were devoted to the organization and governance of the organization SRCD. They would get off the plane go to a committee meeting or Governing Council meeting and just go straight through the day and evening. We would always have dinner at a very nice restaurant. Dorothy Eichorn—I don't know how, but wherever we were she could find the best restaurant in town so we could relax in the evenings. People were very devoted to the organization and it wasn't as if they felt it was something they could get out of it personally as much as they felt it was necessary for the field of child development, and that is sort of the same attitude I have towards SRCD. I think the biggest thing I ever did was program chair but I constantly am very supportive of the organization and the things that they are trying to accomplish. The major problem that I had in terms of the early years of working with the Committee on Minority Participation was to convince members that there was a need for such a committee because everyone had the view that everything was blind and everybody was welcome. They would say, "You know, I'm not a racist, the organization isn't a racist," you know, all that defensive posturing, but they couldn't justify in any way why it is that you had blacks from these noted programs getting Ph.D.s and could not find a niche or a way to participate in SRCD. So that was the most difficult problem. With the activism on the part of blacks I think we activated the concerns of a number of other minorities, especially the Committee on Minority Participation. Not all members viewed their ethnicity the same way. Some people did not want to acknowledge that they were different in any way and did research from mainstream society perspective and, therefore, there wasn't a need for this committee, and those were members from a minority group. So it was a self-selecting process if you wanted to participate. Then the issues, of course, in terms of increasing the number of reviewers in your major journals; *Child Development Abstracts*, publications in journals that minorities were more likely to publish in like the *Journal of Black Psychology*, the *Journal of Hispanic Psychology*. Of course, a lot of those goals were accomplished. A number of blacks have served as editors, a number of blacks have served on the Governing Council. So I think that those early goals which seemed so farfetched and which seemed like an uphill battle to convince people that they were worthwhile have been accomplished in a number of ways. Now that is not to say that the issues have not shifted some and that there are other issues regarding minority participation, but I'm just addressing those that were the ones that we had listed as our objectives in the early 1970s.

**Schellenbach: What do you believe are the most important changes to occur in SRCD in its activities during your association with it?**

Harrison-Hale: I think the most important changes to occur in SRCD in its activities from my perspective has been the accomplishments of the goals that were set up by the Committee of Minority Participation in 1977 and—this is 20 years later—a lot of the things that seemed impossible, as I said, have been accomplished by those early goals and I just feel quite pleased that I was able to participate in that in formulating those goals and in helping to see that they were accomplished. Minority representation on the Governing Council, minority representation on the editorial boards, minority reviewers, minorities participating throughout all the committees of SRCD, minorities participating in the scientific meetings with posters and papers and symposiums and major speakers. All of those were not in existence in 1977. You would have one or two participants that were African Americans specifically but not to the extent that you have now. I'm just amazed at the young researchers coming out who are minorities who come to SRCD and present their papers. I just don't think that they are aware of the rich history of how we got to where we are in SRCD is apparent to those young people, that it took a lot of work and effort and dedication and commitment on the part of major developmental psychologists in the field to bring SRCD to where it is. And it's just really amazing to me when I look at the activities of the association and see the extent of the participation and I'm quite

proud to have been a part of that history and I'm quite proud of the organization and people like Mary Ainsworth and Dorothy Eichorn and John Hagen who committed themselves. Bettye Caldwell—I'm just sitting here thinking I don't want to leave anyone out, but I'm just thinking of the people who were terribly sensitive to the issue. And I will tell you someone who always was just marvelous—Ed Zigler, Barry Brazelton, I can just go on you know—Flavell—I could just go on in naming. These are people who have tremendous careers who were also interested in seeing that minority researchers be treated with all due respect in SRCD and helping the organization fulfill its role as set out by Mary Ainsworth, and that is to serve as professional socializers for new minority researchers.

**Schellenbach:** Please comment on the history of the field during the years that you have participated in it, major continuities and discontinuities and events related to these. Have your views concerning the importance of various issues changed over the years? How?

Harrison-Hale: One of the important historical changes that occurred in the field is the approach to studying minorities. I think the review by McLloyd and Randolph in the early 1980s which gave a critical review of the type of work that was published in *Child Development* was important. I think that the field has trained a number of minority researchers who are sensitive to the culture and now have the professional tools of science to document and empirically describe their experiences and to test out some viable models on development of African American children that are different from what was present in the field when I first got started. I think we have a very useful body of empirical knowledge that young scholars now who are interested in the topic of African American minority children have a body of literature that's a very viable, valid description of these experiences. Now, needless to say, in psychology empirical works build on other works, but we have a good solid foundation now and I think that has been one of the major changes. The importance of context in shaping development is still an issue with me, it's been continuous and you can see it in my work. I think one of the changes that I have made is the format in which I can express those concerns, you know by my own writing and my own research and my own review but, also, I have gained stature in the field through reviewing of manuscripts, through reviewing of text for the major publishers; I carefully review those texts so that stereotypes are not perpetuated by our own textbooks. I discourage insensitive statements, I red ink things that have fostered stereotypes. I think that's a tremendous service. I've mentioned research that they have not included, so I think in my own way and in that format of review of text and manuscripts that I am able to make a contribution, a lasting contribution to the inclusion of the minority experience in mainstream literature in a way that is sensitive and valid to their experiences. I take my task quite seriously and I'm quite proud of that. As I have said before, I haven't been able to mature in profession as much as I want because I have been at a small university and I couldn't get the major fundings but, as you know, you make lemonade from a lemon and I think that by being a reviewer and a serious, committed reviewer of published works in the field that I have been able to shape presentation of the work and the views of generations of students who really and truly got their ideas reconfirmed, perpetuated by text in the field of psychology. Developmental psychologists were contributors to the racism that is in our institutions and this is my small way of trying to do something about that problem and that has been one of the issues that has dominated my professional career.

**Schellenbach:** What are your hopes and fears for the future of the field?

Harrison-Hale: My greatest hope for the field is that through what we do, our research, our publication, our activism, our applied centers that we will increase and contribute to the quality of life for all. That the social problems surrounding our children now-a-days that we can work towards some solutions that will increase the quality of life. I think the Head Start program was developmental psychology at its finest hour. And I don't think any major politician or president has been able to cut fundings for that project and it has made such a difference in the quality of life for children, but with this global economy and the social forces that are present today I think we need to put forth another major effort to make an impact on the lives of children and I think we are going to through these applied centers that we have been funding and through the openness of the organization to being very active to applied research.

My greatest fears, I have two, two major fears. The social forces that are operating in contemporary society are so powerful that my fear is that they will impact our field and SRCD to the point that the field becomes a negative for specific groups. that we would perpetuate negative stereotypes with negative consequences all in the name of science. I constantly remind my students that the early concentration camps were established and sanctioned by psychologists and psychiatrists, people in our field. And it is my fear that somehow or another that this could happen in this country and in this field, that is one of my fears. My other fear is that those with a conservative fundamentalist ideology will gain such influence that they will interfere with the funding process so as to limit our areas of study. In other words, that we will not be able to follow our programs of study from a scientific perspective or as science leads us to increase the quality of life for all but will be limited by an ideology of a small group who gain control of the funding process. I think that that is happening in areas of our lives now and I'm afraid that, for example, a number of issues that I can't mention but I'm sure you are all aware of, but I'm fearful that this will get carried over sort of like a National Endowment of the Arts crisis where the topics and the approach to the arts cannot be offensive to anyone in a self-appointed group, that somehow this approach to funding research that our research topics have to fit within a limited narrow ideology of a select group of people, that's my second greatest fear.

[End of Interview]