Eileen Mavis (Plenderleith) Hetherington

- Born 11/27/1926
- Spouse – John Hetherington
- Ph.D. from University of California, Berkeley (1958); M.A. and B.A. from University of Columbia (1948 and 1947)

Major Employment:
- British Columbia Child Guidance Clinic – 1948-1951, Clinical Psychology
- University of Wisconsin - 1960-1970, Psychology
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Major Areas of Work:
- Personality and Social Development, Childhood Psychopathology, Stress/Coping of Children and Families, Impact of Divorce

SRCD Affiliation:
- Editorial Board Involvement – Child Development (1966-1969), Publication Committee (1977-1983); Editor, Child Development (1977-1984); President (1985-1987)

SRCD ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

E. Mavis Hetherington

Interviewed by Lloyd Borstelman
In Charlottesville, Virginia
December 4, 1992

Borstelman: This interview with Mavis Hetherington, by Lloyd Borstelman, took place on Dec. 4th, 1992, in Charlottesville, Virginia. Mavis, let's begin by you telling something about your background, particularly in terms of how it might be related to your interest in child development.

Hetherington: I didn't start out being interested in psychology or child development. I was an only child with a father who was brilliant, had a Ph.D. in English, a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology, and was a very famous Educational Administrator.

Borstelman: This is where?

Hetherington: British Columbia. He was always very supportive of intellectual activities for me and always had great aspirations for me. He was very warm and loving, and he always fully expected me to do something wonderful.

Borstelman: Fathers can be that way.

Hetherington: My mother wanted me to have a career because she said she never wanted me to be dependent on a man. So I had a lot of pushes from both sides for different reasons from my parents, but they were both very supportive of intellectual enterprise. I was interested in writing, and I had

written and had a lot of poetry and short stories published. I took a double major at the University of British Columbia in English and Psychology, but I only took psychology because I thought it would help me with my characterization in writing fiction. It was a dreadful psychology department. At the time psychology and philosophy made one department, so you were required to take courses in things like logic; unfortunately, not much of that brushed off on me, but I was interested in the content of psychological courses. I was always interested in people; I'm a very extroverted person.

Borstelman: You're a great people person.

Hetherington: I'm a people person; I talk to strangers on airplanes and in hotel lobbies. And I just, I'm very--and I'm always eavesdropping in restaurants; I'm just very interested in people. When I went to get my master's in English, I found Anglo-Saxon wasn't being offered that year. And in Canadian schools you don't have a semester system; and your courses run a full year; and it was required for a master's so it would have meant two years for a master's and I didn't want to spend two years on a master's. So I walked over to the Psychology Department and I said, "Here I am you lucky people," and that's career planning. So that's how I ended up taking a master's in psychology. At that time in clinical work there were almost no Ph.D.'s doing clinical practice in British Columbia. So with a master's I went into the Provincial child guidance system, which was an integrated system that handled all child cases including everything from adoption placement to juvenile court in the province. And I worked as a clinical psychologist and in four years I was Head Psychologist at one of the largest psychology departments in Canada. We used to have traveling clinics and anywhere there were four cases referred in the province, they would send out two psychologists, a psychiatrist, a psychiatric nurse, and a psychiatric social worker. It was really community mental health before there was such a thing as community mental health. We flew into places with bush pilots; we'd get a referral. I remember one from Nacosta and we said, "Where is Nacosta?" It was in the Arrow Lakes, the headwaters of the Columbia. You went by train, a little train that kept dropping things off. And then you had to take a paddle boat down the lake and it ended at this little town. And you'd go places that the local judge or a public health nurse with a district the size of Texas had referred for cases. You'd go in and when you went in you had to very rapidly find out what resources where available in the community because your choice was to either find local resources--and these were not going to be professional resources; these were going to be a friend of the family, a kindly school teacher, or an interested public health nurse because otherwise your option was to send them down to Vancouver for professional help and put them either in an institution or a foster home. And these decisions were made very rapidly, so it was a very exciting kind of experience. But after working for four years--

Borstelman: Well this is what time, what date, what years?

Hetherington: This would be '47, '48 to '52. I started to get distressed about two things: first I didn't like the relationship between psychology and psychiatry. We had a couple of wonderful psychiatrists in the systems, but we had a lot of real losers. You'd do a diagnostic work-up and psychologists were not allowed to put a diagnostic label on. So you would--if you had an autistic child you would go through all the symptoms of autism, describe all the symptoms, and have whispered in the psychiatrist's ear, "The child is autistic." But you couldn't say this in the group conference, he had to say this. So I got very distressed about the status, and I was impressed by--I was also impressed by the ignorance of practicing clinicians, both by psychologists and psychiatrists. I was impressed by the fact that we didn't know very much about children; we didn't know very much about human behavior. The methods we were using weren't working. At that time we used play therapy a lot, and it was the kind of indulgent play therapy where you let the kids just roar around and raise hell and tried to establish a relationship and then made--

Borstelman: On the run.

Hetherington: --made loose interpretations of what was going on in the play sessions. And what impressed me was how little we knew and how ineffectual we were.

Borstelman: Gee, you're singing my song.

Hetherington: So I went back to school. I was naive enough in applying for graduate schools that I didn't know they were hard to get in. So I just applied to Berkeley, and I had wanted to work with Eric Hamburger Erickson; he had left because of the loyalty oath, but they said he would be coming back. So I went down there, and of course, he never came back. When I went to Berkeley, one of the things that continued to impress me was how little we knew about clinical psychology. So I was not impressed when I started.

Borstelman: Particularly with respect to children?

Hetherington: With respect to children, I was appalled at how little we knew. I was appalled at the fact that we seemed to be taking adult theories of psychopathology and trying to impose them on children. I also was appalled because we tried to treat children in isolation, and it simply didn't work especially if you worked with children from very deprived backgrounds or from very disturbed families; it just wasn't working.

Borstelman: And ironically, of course, that was the psychoanalytic approach.

Hetherington: Yes, it was. And it really struck me once when I was seeing a girl in treatment at the Langley Porter Clinic; another therapist was seeing the mother and another therapist was seeing the father. The little girl kept saying to me, "I'm afraid of my mother; I think she's going to kill me." This child tended to have a lot of fantasies and was very anxious, but the mother's therapist had neglected to tell me that the mother was quite paranoid and was having homicidal impulses towards the child. So we've had these kinds of parallel treatment sessions that seemed really quite ludicrous. When I was at Berkeley, one of the things that impressed me was first, how dull a lot of the clinical research was and second, the great need we had to do clinical research to build some kind of solid database in understanding how psychopathology was developed and a solid database for intervention and prevention in disorders of children. Now I had gone down really intending to go back into clinical practice. Although I liked some of my clinical faculty, I was not turned on by the things they were doing. I was never going to do test construction and spend my life devoted to the CPL. There seemed to be a real schism there between researchers and practitioners. It seemed to me that the people who taught us therapy were not researchers, and the people who taught us research were not therapists. So the schism was very apparent. I had to take some time to remedy some of the deficiencies in my training at UBC. So I had to take courses in learning and the history of psychology, and I took them with Leo Postman. And I found Leo stimulating, erudite, and I may be the only student who thought he was extremely witty. And I was really--it wasn't that I was interested in learning as the area I wanted to work in, but I liked to see how he thought about scientific problems. So I ended up doing my dissertation with Leo.

Borstelman: Apparently quite a number of Berkeley students did.

Hetherington: And he really is the single person who most influenced me to become a scientist. And I think becoming a scientist instead of a practitioner was because of Leo, and I owe him a great debt. I often regret that I haven't expressed this enough to him. He was certainly the most important influence in my life at Berkeley and really you talk about critical transitions in your life and meeting Leo and doing research with him was a critical transition for me.

Borstelman: So you worked on learning.

Hetherington: I worked on--he was very good to me I went to him and said I'd gotten very interested in notions of rigidity in perceptual tasks and how that might be related to personality. And he said, "Well, I've had three people work on rigidity and it's had no payoff." And he gave me some readings on incidental learning that he was working on and said, "Read these and see if there's anything you're interested in--in incidental learning." And I said, "Well, I would be interested in individual differences

in incidental learning.” So that's what I did my dissertation on, on a variety of individual different attributes in incidental and intentional learning. But he was very supportive of me; I have--I can always knock the top off of any verbal test, but my quantitative skills are not tremendous and he was always very supportive of me. So he would say, “Well, I think we need an analysis of covariance” and there would be a thunderous silence. And he would say, “Do you know how to do an analysis of covariance.” And I would say, “Well, now it just happens I don't know.” And he would sit down and walk me through how to do an analysis of covariance. And I really felt that he, in many ways, saw things in me that my other professors didn't. I think one of my problems was that I was very pretty when I was young and I think pretty women suffer a great handicap because people can't see beyond the surface to see that they have anything.

Borstelman: They assume that there's nothing going on between the ears.

Hetherington: And when I would get a fellowship I would have people say to me, “Well, that's just because you're so pretty,” or it was, “This instructor has a crush on you,” kind of thing, which was very difficult. And I tried, I always tried to bend over backwards to keep my distance from and have a formal relationship. That was not necessary with Leo; he was always a very proper although supportive person, a very proper person. So I have just the greatest appreciation for what he's done.

Borstelman: Were there other significant mentors for you at Berkeley?

Hetherington: John McKee was; I started out working with John, and he was very important to me. I was Harold Jones' T. A. and I think it--being his T .A. you had X-rays of every kid in the Berkeley studies and of the clothes and the bones and the hands, and he was a support to me. Dorothy [Eichorn], Dottie, I shared her office when I TA'd. She came as a young instructor, and she was very supportive of me. Then Paul Mussen came later on in my career, and Paul too was always very supportive of me. Harrison Goff was also in clinical; Harrison Goff was a very supportive person. One of the things I look back on is, with the exception probably of Dottie, the people I felt close to were all male. So when people talk about mentors now and how they have to be of the same gender and they have to be of the same race, I get very impatient. I think what you need in a mentor is somebody who is competent, stimulating and supportive, and is involved with you. I feel that we've lost sight of what real mentoring is now.

Borstelman: But what about during your Berkeley years, what was there by way of training for working with children or families?

Hetherington: Well, there, I mean, family therapy wasn't alive and well at that point. So you got individual training with adults and, I mean, some worked with children, but it was the typical play therapy kind of approach to working with children.

Borstelman: But, I mean, were there facilities you could work?

Hetherington: Well, I took my internship at the Langley Porter Clinic, so I worked there and I worked at the university clinic where I saw some children.

Borstelman: The university clinic? Oh, ok.

Hetherington: It was associated with the hospital, and they saw some children.

Borstelman: I remember very significantly for me in my immediate post four-year late-40s was that, of course, Jean McFarlane was head of the clinical training program and she had a long established relation--working relationship for her long-term study with the Berkeley schools so that all of us, and the trainees at that time, did some initial kinds of evaluation work with kids in the city in the Berkeley schools.

Hetherington: Yes we did too; we did evaluation work.

Borstelman: And one of the things--the thing that I remember very vividly was what you spoke of earlier. Namely, what struck me about this half a dozen or so cases that I did a considerable work-up on was how little we understood them and how much they needed to be understood.

Hetherington: Yes, absolutely. Absolutely, Lloyd. And--

Borstelman: What about other significant grad students at the time?

Hetherington: Diana Baumrind, Wanda Bronson, and Lucy Rau Ferguson.

Borstelman: Who?

Hetherington: Lucy Rau Ferguson.

Borstelman: Oh sure, a good friend of mine.

Hetherington: So they were all people that I was close to and admired and enjoyed and have maintained contact with. I was very impressed with Diana who was raising a family; in fact, I think she was in the late stages of pregnancy when she was taking her orals exams. I always used to tease her and say, “Well, if they ask and if things are going badly, go into labor; it's the only way out.” But there are people that I've always admired, and I met Jack Block there. Jack has been a great friend and somebody whose work I admire. So there have been people I've kept contact with, and certainly the people were very important to me.

Borstelman: Was Jean Block around Berkeley at that time, or was that later?

Hetherington: I didn't know Jean at that time; I did not know Jean at that time. I think one of the things at Berkeley that was very destructive was that it was a very stressful environment for students. I think that students were terribly afraid of failing out and a lot of them did fail out although they were highly selected to begin with. And I had the feeling, although not to such an extent when I went to Wisconsin, that a lot of very competent people were dropping out or getting thrown out of the program because they couldn't deal with stress. So I thought to get through the Berkeley program you not only had to be smart and work hard, but you had to be awfully good at dealing with high levels of stress. Certainly the qualifying exams we had to take, in what were they 13 areas or something, were real killers. I remember once, you know, you studied for them over your first five semesters, and I can remember looking at my notes on the mentality of apes and seeing it was in my handwriting, but I could not remember ever having read that book. But I had very detailed notes, very detailed notes. But you were reading so much in so many different areas that you weren't really integrating it as well as you should. I think in some ways maybe knowledge in psychology at that point--those were the last gasps of thinking you could train general psychologists. I think we've recognized that the state of the field is such that you can't train general psychologists; we know too much now to train general psychologists. But that was sort of in the period where we thought we still could, and I think we did train some fairly good general psychologists then. I think in many ways I'm not even sure if psychology is a field anymore; I think psychology is a series of fields. My work I could work probably better in an interdisciplinary institute that dealt with children and families and had sociologists and demographers and economists and other people who were educators, people who were interested in families.

Borstelman: But does such an institute exist any place?

Hetherington: I don't think it does, not the kind I'm talking about, not the kind I'm talking about.

Borstelman: Strange isn't it?

Hetherington: Yes, I think people have attempted it when people like Whiting and Sears and so on were together. But one of our problems is that we're so rigidly locked into the notion of disciplines. I think educators are very reactionary, and certainly when trying to make any kind of academic changes the greatest force against change is the faculty. I think our organization of higher education is ludicrous and it hasn't changed for years, but I certainly think I would feel more comfortable in an interdisciplinary institute. I'm in a lot of--I do a lot of interdisciplinary research and feel comfortable working with people.

Borstelman: OK. Now you were telling me earlier that you got married when you and your husband, new husband went off to Rutgers.

Hetherington: Well, I wouldn't get married until I got my Ph.D.

Borstelman: Oh, that was it.

Hetherington: Yes, I saw too many people who got married and never finished their Ph.D. So I'd met John at International House and then he hung around a couple of years waiting for me. Well, it wasn't exactly hanging around; he was clerk to the Chief Justice in my circuit. But then he took a job with a large New York law firm and I went east and taught at Rutgers Newark, which was a small and very peculiar school. But it had--Dorothy Dinnerstein was there and Dan Laraman was there, so it was a tiny department but had some very good students; I really had a good time teaching there. And we were in New York for three years and I'm always--I had a very heavy teaching load. I'm always amused when people say you can't do research and teach with a heavy load because I was publishing like a mad thing. Then our first child was born in New York and we decided you couldn't raise kids in New York, at least not the way we wanted to raise them. John had always been interested in teaching and was not finding working with a Wall Street firm terribly gratifying. He said to me, he was working corporational law, and he said, “You know, there are no good guys or bad guys, so there's no kind of--”

Borstelman: Nothing but crooks.

Hetherington: “--there's no kind of satisfaction when you win a case.” He said, “It's an intellectual exercise like playing chess and it's the same kind of satisfaction you get from winning a chess game. But there's no kind of moral satisfaction or feeling you're doing anything worthwhile.” So he had a job offer at Wisconsin, to teach at Wisconsin; so we went off to Wisconsin. When I went I didn't have a full-time position, and I taught part-time in education, part-time in psychology for a year, and then at the end of the year was offered a regular tenure track appointment both in education and psychology and went into psychology. At that time I was really the first woman who was--at that time Fran Graham was half in pediatrics and half in psychology, but she really wasn't doing much in the Psychology Department. So when I went in I was sort of alone, although Fran was very supportive to me; she was not a major player in the Psychology Department, so I went in as really the only woman who was there. And it was a very sexist psychology department; in fact, the University of Wisconsin is a very sexist school and it has several times lost law suits that were filed by female faculty for discrimination. The discrimination was very overt; I was a full professor and would object to getting the lowest salary of any of the full professors as I was one of the most productive people on the faculty and certainly one of their most popular teachers. And they would say, “Well you don't need the money; your husband has a good salary." And they'd say, "Well, why do you care so much?” and I'd say, “Because I want it; I think money is a sign that I'm appreciated.” And one had the nerve to say, “We love yak honey.” So I mean it was very blatant sexism. Now two people who were terrific to me were Len Berkowitz, who was a very supportive person, and Jack Gilchrist who was chair of the department at the time. Jack and I got along very well, and I remember one time saying to Jack, you know, “Jack I'm out-publishing the men, I'm teaching more students than anyone else, I'm working 80 hours a week, and I still don't feel like I'm getting ahead.” I said, “I think I'm going to take a year out and grow a penis.” And he said, “If you can do it, you're in.”

Borstelman: Indeed.

Hetherington: But it was just accepted that that's the way things were. And when I went they had started to design the new building that Psychology moved into a few years later, but it was still in the design process and so changes could be made. And I--Wolf Brogdon was in charge of the building--and I would say, “You know, I need labs with mirrors that go down to the floor because I want to observe kids and with toddlers if they sit against the wall you can't see them if you have this sort of, this kind of--” And he'd say, “This building was never intended for children.” So it was not a sort of welcoming scene. But it was kind of interesting what happened because once I did get tenure it was almost like cognitive dissonance for the other people because they figured if I'd made tenure I must be good after all. So people who had really not wanted me there ended up being very nice to me. Fred Mote was somebody who came and told--he was very nice to me, but he told me he had not wanted me in the department and had not supported me the first couple of years and that he had been wrong.

Borstelman: Good for him.

Hetherington: Which was terrific but even though, I did get to be a full professor there and I had wonderful students there, just wonderful. Oh we just had the greatest students, but they worked under terrible conditions. I mean, the stresses were just terrible. I think about how there were times when, you know, a third of the class was failed out. I didn't go to the sort of big celebration there a couple of years ago; it may have been their 150th anniversary. But people who did go said it was very funny because there was so much anger in the students who'd gone through; they still felt angry about the stress they'd gone through. And people would say, “Well, you've passed.” The students would get these letters that would say, “You've passed your first hurdle, now your next hurdle is--” And they would talk in terms of hurdles and it just destroyed us; we failed out--I'm not going to mention names, but we failed out people who went on to be very successful psychologists elsewhere.

Borstelman: Well I was going to ask you, in that sense there is a similarity to Berkeley where you were a graduate student. Now do you think that was more generally prevailed in that era or do you think those particular institutions?

Hetherington: Wisconsin was much worse than Berkeley in terms of what they did to--Wisconsin was much worse than Berkeley.

Borstelman: As I remember--

Hetherington: Wisconsin was really notorious. I mean, nationally it was just well-known as a very cutthroat environment.

Borstelman: I remember Berkeley in the late 40's; I remember it as being stressful, but I also remember it as being stimulating.

Hetherington: Yes, and I think that Wisconsin was stimulating. There were some wonderful people: Harry Harlow was there, Lynn Berkowitz was there, Pete Lang was there. You know, there were just a lot of--Barkley Martin was there--I mean, there were a lot wonderful people, but it was just the general ambience; there was a tremendous rift between the experimental psychologists and the clinicians. So the clinicians had a really tough time, and I did not envy Bob Martin being Director of the clinical because during the--Wisconsin was one of the most violent schools during the Vietnam War protests, and they were really violent. Faculty homes were fire bombed, cars were damaged, buildings were trashed, and they blew up and killed a graduate student. It was an environment that attracted a lot of radicals that weren't part of the university. But the university also had a liberal reputation like Berkeley, so it attracted people; the university attracted liberal students. A lot of the student leaders in the protests were psychology students and a lot of them were clinical psychology students. And poor Bob Martin got blamed by some of the experimentalists for not being able to keep the students in tow. But it was a horrible time. And although there were wonderful students--I mean, Alan Sroufe and John Gottman and Barbara Malaman, and they were all there at the same time; it was thrilling to work with

students like that. But it got to the stage in the late 60's where you were spending all your time negotiating with students. And I like to teach, I like to do research, and I like to work closely with students; I do not like to spend half my time in negotiations with students about one thing or another. And we had--I had people come with billy clubs and beat my students up in the class and come up to the podium and throw the furniture off the podium and yank your neck mike off. It was very distressing and that was one of the reasons that made us decide to leave. We had threats on the children's lives, and we thought of sending the kids to their grandparents and then John said, “This is crazy! We don't want to be separated from our kids, and it's time to get out.” I had always said that my next move was going to be my Rhododendron move because I'm a gardener and I couldn't grow Rhododendrons in Wisconsin. John called one day and said, “I think I just had your Rhododendron move on the phone.” So we came down here. We were going on leave to Berkeley in the spring. We came down here I think about the end of November, interviewed, and decided we were going. The psych department here was terrible. When I interviewed, John said, “What did you think of the Psych Department?” And I said, “It's a great 1940's psychology department,” but they were about to put a lot of money into the social sciences and were going to build and it looked like fun. They really said you can hire at any level, so it really looked to me like it was going to be stimulating. I liked the people in the department, but I went in and I said to the chairman, “I'm going to go to Virginia.” And he said, “Don't be ridiculous, nobody goes to Virginia.” And then a few days my letter of resignation was on his desk and he said, “What is this?” He didn't believe me. “What is this, nobody leaves Wisconsin for Virginia.” Anyhow, it was a good move. Now my research over that period of time: I had started out and I had done a lot of work on learning sets with mentally retarded and normal children. I had been interested in that, but I really was more interested in personal and social development. But I figured at Wisconsin I'd better keep doing laboratory experimental studies if I was going to get tenure. So, on the side I started doing studies, like studies on single-parent families.

Borstelman: OK what got you interested in that?

Hetherington: In clinical work? I just would frequently see children from single-parent families. But the other thing is a lot of my interest was in sex role development and a lot of my work, and Paul Mussen's work, on sex role development suggested that traditional masculinity and femininity tended to be associated more with the father's behavior than with the mother's. So femininity in daughters was not associated with femininity in mothers, but it was associated with masculinity in fathers and with reinforcement of fathers by supporting traditionally feminine activities and so on. So I started to think, “Well, what happens to sex role typing when you no longer have a father in the home.” Well, once I got into--so I went in because I was interested in sex role typing. But once I got in to start really looking at these families, it became quite obvious that it wasn't about the absence of a father as much as what was going on in the lives of the custodial mothers and children and the family processes going on in these mother-headed families. The different life experiences and stresses they were encountering were also contributing to differences in their developmental outcomes. Now when I went in at that time I had a very pathogenic model of what I expected to find in one-parent households, but one of the things that struck me was the tremendous diversity in the response to the kinds of experiences you had in one-parent households. I've been--

Borstelman: Meaning?

Hetherington: That some children do very well in a one-parent household while some seem to suffer permanent developmental delays or disruptions. Some do well at first, but have problems emerge especially in adolescence and at times when they are trying to form new intimate relationships. So one of the themes that started to come out, and certainly one I'm writing about a lot now, is that just using means really obscures what is going on in these households. You need to use things like cluster analysis to try and say there's different ways of coping with these households and these experiences. And one of the other things is, of course, the emphasis that it is really family process and not family structure that is the critical factor in what happens to these children so that if you have caring, firm, and involved parents, kids are able to deal with many of the stresses like poverty and others that are associated with poor, divorced, and single-parent households. And I'm very impressed by the fact that kids clearly

do better in a well-functioning single-parent household than in a conflict-ridden, two-parent household.

Borstelman: Right, right. Not surprisingly.

Hetherington: No, no, but it's certainly not a belief that was very widespread 25 years ago when I started to work in--

Borstelman: It's interesting; it suggests how constrained--it suggests that investigators are very much a product of their culture and where it is at any given point of time.

Hetherington: Well, we're also a product of our culture. Most research on mother-headed families was done on boys because of psychoanalytic theory we thought that it should be the boys who had difficulties. And we thought the difficulties should occur in two areas: because they didn't have a father, there should be defects in superego development and so we thought they should occur in anti-social behavior and they should occur in sex role typing; those are the two areas we focused on. So we had a pathogenic model. We focused on father absence rather than on what the mother-son relationship might be contributing; it was a very narrow perspective.

Borstelman: Meanwhile in adult psychopathology we were talking about the psychogenic, psychopathogenic mother.

Hetherington: That's right, that's right. I think it's, for me anyhow and I think for the field, staring to really move towards looking much more at the family process than the family structure and this notion of father absence. And then, of course, you got very aware that families don't function in isolation and that you have to consider the larger social setting they function in. One of the things that interest me is that the sizes of effects associated with divorce are smaller now than they were when I worked. So when I--and I'd used family problem-solving tasks and observations for 25 years. I used to do revealed difference tests; now I do hot problem-solving (that's the family's own problems) rather than family problem-solving vignettes, but the effect sizes are smaller now than effect sizes were 20 or 25 years ago. And I think it's because children don't feel so deviant when they're in classrooms where there are other children. Twenty-five years ago divorce was still infrequent enough that a child might be the only child who had gone through divorce in a classroom and would feel marked, odd, or strange just having a mother. You know, now you go into classes in some Morin County classrooms and find that 70% of the kids are from divorced families. So the effects are different, but certainly--and I think--

Borstelman: The effects are less and there is less negative impact, is that what you are saying?

Hetherington: Yes, but it's still there.

Borstelman: Oh yes. But the scale is ….

Hetherington: The effect size is smaller. They are still going through separation, loss, and conflict, but another thing that's important is that mothers are better educated now. Mothers are more independent and even though many of our mothers after divorce show a great decline in income, more of them are better educated and have been working before the divorce; they're better able to look after themselves when they're alone.

Borstelman: More than when?

Hetherington: Than 25 years ago.

Borstelman: In other words we are talking about generational difference.

Hetherington: I'm talking about cohort effects, right. So even though divorce is never an easy experience, it is always more stressful for someone in the family. It isn't as stressful as it once was when women were playing much more traditional roles and really had trouble with their identities outside of their role as wife and mother. Women also often lost their social networks when they divorced, partly because even their family blamed them for getting a divorce. It was viewed as a sort of a moral weakness even if they'd had experiences with abusive husbands, neglecting husbands, or cruel husbands; it was still viewed as a moral weakness to get a divorce.

Borstelman: As though it were some stigma of personal failure.

Hetherington: That's right, that's right. So I think things have changed a great deal.

Borstelman: Well it's interesting in the generation of our children, for example, that the women of that generation as I just sit here and think about them--how most of them really have approached life in terms of having a life of their own outside, aside from, independent of, separate from the family life as men have always done.

Hetherington: Yes, so I mean, that's important. And my research really suggests that being an employed woman is a very important buffering factor in divorce because you maintain a social network. Whereas, if you're a non-working women your social network is often your husband's business acquaintances and that goes with him when the divorce occurs. And you have a sense of accomplishment and self-esteem associated. You don't have the isolation that many divorced women have as you have someone to talk to. And you also have the source of money, which is a good thing to have following a divorce.

Borstelman: Yeah and a sense of--well yeah, if you're not a working woman then the family break-up is more devastating because there is no outlet for ongoing meaningful self-work.

Hetherington: I remember one woman who said to me, "I used to be Mrs. John Smith, the bank manager's wife. Now I'm just Mary Smith. Who is Mary Smith?" So there is the sense of loss of identity. One of the things that have impressed me is how divorce is both an opportunity to deviate off into distress and psychopathology, but it's also a great opportunity for personal growth. And my studies certainly show that many of our mothers and many of our children, I think, attain levels of competence they never would have attained without going through the experience of divorce and having coped with it. So we saw many women who started out being very dismayed by the divorce and many of whom had been fairly traditional wives and had depended on their husbands for their sense of identity and were terrified at the divorce. But they rose to the occasion as many went back to school and got job training; they had to look after their children.

Borstelman: They had more resources than they knew.

Hetherington: That's right. And what happened is some of these women developed into superwomen. They became competent in social activities, competent as providers and in their careers, and very competent as mothers. And these are some of the most impressive women I have ever seen. Where women--and I think if they had remained in the marriages they would have never known they had these resources to call on; they never would have developed this way. Very often the husband was smothering them, putting them down, and had given them low self-esteem. And this growth was wonderful to see in these women.

Borstelman: It's been hard for the men to cope with hasn't it?

Hetherington: Yes.

Borstelman: And I don't mean just the husbands.

Hetherington: No, many men. Many women talk about how although they're poor, although they're under multiple stresses, and although it isn't easy raising children alone that it's easier to raise them alone than with either a non-supportive, or a contemptuous, or disengaged father. In the long run, we find that most of our divorced women, in the long run, think that it was a good thing.

Borstelman: So you sound more upbeat about the enormous frequency, the great frequency, the increasing frequency of divorce than most people seem to.

Hetherington: Oh, I'm not-- I don't think-- I'm not saying all women feel this way, there is a--I mean there's a substantial group of women who are depressed, they rate their life satisfaction as very low, and they're lonely, but what I'm emphasizing is that there are diverse responses. And what we tend to focus on is sort of this Judy Wallerstein thing where if you've gone through divorce, it's like giving your kids aids; it's a fatal disease; the kids are marked forever. Well, we find that our kids look back and they say, "It was one of the most painful experiences I've ever gone through," but most of them are functioning ok. They are functioning; most of them are functioning. There's a clinical sub group if we use clinical cutoffs on something like the Achenbach, you find in non-divorce families about a 10% score above the clinical cutoff. In divorced families about 20% score above the clinical cut off. You can say, "Well, that's terrible; that's twice as many," but it means 80% are doing OK; 80% are doing OK and not at clinical levels of problem behavior.

Borstelman: Well, you know that the prevailing view of the effects of divorce, the view that had prevailed, is really then a hangover from a psychodynamic perspective.

Hetherington: I think it is; I think it is, and I think it's a hangover from a moralistic perspective that divorce is an immoral act and that it's irresponsible. Now I think--

Borstelman: So you're supposed to be stressed and unhappy, etc. etc. etc.?

Hetherington: I think we divorce too easily. I think all marriages go through good and bad cycles.

Borstelman: Sure, stresses.

Hetherington: Our young folks are bailing out at the first bad cycle and are not marrying for better or for worse; they're marrying for better and better.

Borstelman: It's time to trade cars, the ashtray is full.

Hetherington: That's right. It's sort of they really think through successive marriages they can improve their status. It's sort of boot strapping your way to marital happiness.

Borstelman: It does make you feel very old fashioned doesn't it?

Hetherington: Well, people are always saying to me, "Why are you working divorce? I bet you've been divorced." And I say, "No. I've been married to one husband."

Borstelman: Let's go back and talk a bit about how you got--I mean, you've done a tremendous amount of work now and are continuing to do so with respect to family breakups and single parenting and so on and so forth. Now how did you get involved in all that?

Hetherington: Well, I got involved, as I said, through my interest in sex role typing. Then once you start looking at one-parent families, you start looking at why they are one-parent families, which at that time tended to be more divorce than teenage. And then once you get interested in divorce, you get interested in re-marriage because you have such high rates of remarriage.

Borstelman: And the game is never over.

Hetherington: That's right, and the game is never over. So you really think of divorce as just part of a series of marital transitions that people go through.

Borstelman: I remember well, because you spoke about it with us down at Duke back in '72, your wonderful, delightful study about the adolescent daughters of the three kinds of fathers, or father status I should say. So how did you get involved in that particular study?

Hetherington: Well, that again started out as a sex role study I was interested in and I had thought that--

Borstelman: As many of us were in the 60's.

Hetherington: Yeah, and when I was interested in daughters of divorcees and daughters of widows as two kinds of father absence. But I didn't--I had not anticipated that they would be at opposite ends of the spectrum. I thought they would both show disruptions in sex role behavior and it became apparent that sex role behavior was the last thing you wanted to look at with those girls. It was in their relationships with boys and males that--it was in the early heterosexual relationships.

Borstelman: Well, one of the things that was striking to me about that study was how important the behavioral measures were.

Hetherington: Oh yes. And of course what was great fun in that study was that we had--first it was a huge multi-method study and there weren't that many studies like that around at the time.

Borstelman: Was that at Wisconsin?

Hetherington: Yes, at Wisconsin, but we did observations of the kids in a community center.

Borstelman: Right, I remember.

Hetherington: And we did observations in the lab, and we did observations in the home. So we really relied very heavily on looking at them interacting with their peer group. We looked at how they interacted with male and female interviewers, and we looked at how they interacted with their Mum. So yes, we relied very heavily on their interaction and I think it's been characteristic of my work that I try to get self-report measures; I try to get reports from other members of the family, and I try to get observations. So I try to converge in my big longitudinal study of divorce, the one that I started it for, but multi-method and also convergent information. So if we're trying to get information on mother's parenting, we have child reports of mother parenting, fathers reports of mother parenting, observers, and mothers.

Borstelman: Now this started when the kids were four?

Hetherington: Yes, for my big longitudinal and I'm just writing up the 15 year-old wave now.

Borstelman: Fifteen year-old, yes.

Hetherington: And what's really interesting is that there are a number of things and these are really related too. I'm writing an article on this now for a special issue of the *Journal of Family Psychology and Divorce* and what's interesting, Lloyd, is that something happens in adolescence. Now I did that short longitudinal study with W. Glen Clingempeel that just came out as a monograph last summer. It was an SRCD monograph and that was a short longitudinal study where we looked at kids in early adolescence whose parents had re-married, and we compared them to a group of kids who were in a divorced family and whose mothers had been divorced for the same length of time as the mothers in the re-married family. So when you look at them in re-marriage you're saying, "What would they have

looked like if they'd stayed in the divorced families or had gone through the additional transition?" And then we used a non-divorced group and followed them for 26 months. Now the reason we picked early adolescence was because some of my other cross-sectional work had suggested two things: it had suggested that girls from divorced families start to act out and become sexually active earlier than girls in non-divorced families; so early adolescence is very important. And the other thing is that early adolescence is a dreadful time to have a remarriage occur as kids are going to be resistant and there's going to be many more problems and much less adaptation. So that study that just came out in the SRCD monograph was a separate longitudinal study. But in my big one that's gone from ages 4 to 15, we looked at some of the interesting things and same things about early adolescence and what was--it's early maturation that's associated with acting out behavior in girls. So in our divorce girls you don't get more acting out behavior in the kids who are not early maturers. The girls who are sexually active are early maturing girls of single-parent households who get involved with older boys and get in a lot of trouble. And getting involved with older boys sucks them into alcohol and substance abuse also. Another thing that's interesting we've found in three separate studies now is girls in step-father families hit menarche earlier. Now in the animal studies there are findings that the presence of a male leads to stimulation. Now we have done three different studies and we found menarche in one study at four months earlier and in another at eight and another at 10, all in step-father families. So the presence of a step-father seems to be stimulating.

Borstelman: How so?

Hetherington: I think there may be this biological triggering.

Borstelman: But why step-fathers?

Hetherington: I think it's having an unrelated male in the house. And something that I can't look at with the data we've got is does it make a difference if the step-father has been there since the child was an infant versus having entered say somewhere during the latency period or just before.

Borstelman: And the group that you've looked at so far is at what age period?

Hetherington: Well, one is the ages 4-15 study, and one is the short-term longitudinal one where they were in early adolescence. But another one is this huge study I'm doing with David Reese and Robert Plomin with 720 families from 48 states in the Union.

Borstelman: This is a consortium thing?

Hetherington: No, this is a different study and we've got identical twins, fraternal twins, non-divorced families, and we've got two children looking at siblings. Then we've got three different kinds of step-families with different degrees of biological relatedness and we've got blended families where the sibs are not biologically related at all. We've got families where the sibs both come from the mother's previous marriage so they are full siblings. Then we've got families where one kid comes from the mother's previous marriage but one is born in the new marriage so they have the same mother but different fathers. So it's a wonderful design in the study with identical and fraternal twins in terms of degree of biological relatedness, and we're looking at the development of depression and conduct disorders and social and academic competence in these kids. And we're trying to look at the contribution of genetic factors as well as shared environment and non-shared environment; it's a terrific design. Anyhow, in that study also in our step-father families, puberty is occurring earlier. So we've got three different samples.

Borstelman: Now how does this relate, if it does, to the whole, the long-term, the cohort effects of earlier age of menarche? I'm talking more generally then demographic data.

Hetherington: We're comparing it to the timing of menarche in the non-divorce families, so they're in the same cohort.

Borstelman: No I'm sorry; I moved away from your study. Now I'm talking about just generally that it's become earlier and earlier over time.

Hetherington: Yes, yes it has.

Borstelman: How does that relate to what you found?

Hetherington: I don't think it relates to what I'm talking about unless you want to say maybe girls are getting out and interacting with boys at an earlier age, but I don't think that's what is happening. I think what's happening has all sorts of things to do with nutrition and so on.

Borstelman: Yeah, OK. I guess I'm just curious about the possible interactions between, or is it possible to look at this step-father or this biological relatedness question as a--?

Hetherington: We don't have data on our cohorts; our kids were too young. I don't have cohort data, you know, of adolescence 20 years ago to look at that, and I don't think anybody else has very good data. There may be in survey data something buried; it would be fun to look at, but I don't have any. Anyhow, for the new study we're just collecting our second wave of data now, so we have 720 sibling pairs and families. And what's terrific and if we'd been into at the offset I would have--shoot we have video tapes of all these families and family problem-solving. I mean, I'd like you to have seen my lab; I have literally thousands of family video tapes from all the studies I've done over the years. But, I mean, we have family problem-solving in this new study. We have the dyads mother-child one, mother-child two, father-child one, the sibling dyads, we've got triads and tetrads and the marital dyads in family problem-solving from 48 states in the union with 720 families. It's undoubtedly the biggest observational data bank, and we're getting the second wave of the kids who were still in the home and about 450 where neither sib had left.

Borstelman: OK let’s take a break.

Hetherington: Ok.

Borstelman: Ok, let's talk a little bit about teaching.

Hetherington: Teaching’s been one of the most fulfilling things in my career. I think what I love about an academic career is the variety in the academic career; you can do research, you can write, and if you're a clinician you can see families and children. But the thing that's really fun is working with students and being a mentor and seeing them develop and revealing a new field to them. So I’ve always liked teaching things like introductory psych or--

Borstelman: That's just because you are a people person.

Hetherington: --or the first child psychology course; I love to teach those courses because you're introducing new ideas to students, and you can just see the excitement grow in students as they go along. So I really enjoy both undergraduate and graduate teaching. My teaching load has always been divided between the two; I've never opted to do only graduate teaching.

Borstelman: I think that's a healthy combination.

Hetherington: And the young people are just--

Borstelman: That is if you like teaching.

Hetherington: The young people are so exciting and also I'm--you know, I like big classes; I enjoy lecturing. I don't use notes, and one of the things that happens when you don't use notes in lecturing or

in giving public presentations is that it's stressful. I've never gotten, I've never--because you just aren't reading a paper or reading notes, you have to really work. So I spend--even if I'm teaching two courses that I have taught 50 times before, I spend 14 hours a week on classroom preparation. So I always—if I'm teaching an afternoon course, I've worked on it the day before, and I close my door and I work on that lecture before I go into class. Then it looks very easy when you get up and do it for students. I had a student come up to me once and say, "Oh Doctor Hetherington, it's wonderful the way you lecture with no notes when you're obviously so unprepared."

Borstelman: Well, you'd almost think you were Irish, you know, and full of the blarney.

Hetherington: But I love to try to bring psychology alive to students and try to relate research to real life experiences. So the course I teach most often now at the undergraduate level--I still teach the introductory child course, but I teach a course on the family and human development. And it's one that students view as a very tough course, but they also view it as very relevant to their own lives and their own experiences; the discussion is wonderful that you get.

Borstelman: Why do they view it as tough?

Hetherington: Because it has probably the largest reading list of any course in the university and the readings are very difficult; I give them a lot of prime journal readings.

Borstelman: This is an advanced class.

Hetherington: It is a senior seminar; it's a fourth year class and about half of the reading list would overlap with my graduate course. So it's a high level course. We read a lot of Gottman and Patterson and Rutter and Garmezy; we're reading pretty high level things for undergraduate students, but they get very excited by it and it's great fun to work with them. I've been very lucky also in graduate students I've worked with over the years and I've had a--I've maintained contact and am very close to people like Barbara Malaman and Al Sroufe and John Gottman and Martha Cox and my post-doctoral students and have been--like Lindsay Chase Lansdale has been just a wonderful student. And here I've had a lot of young people who are out now at Anderson and one of the one's I think is most outstanding is Peggy Hagen. I've just been so lucky because I've had wonderful graduate students.

Borstelman: Do you find now that you have really a widespread reputation for your work? Do you find that students are coming to here to study specifically with you?

Hetherington: Oh yes.

Borstelman: Not just post grads but I mean as graduate students.

Hetherington: Yes. Yes.

Borstelman: So they've been exposed to some of your stuff as undergraduates.

Hetherington: Yes and a lot of them come because they know my work.

Borstelman: Do you have a hand in choosing them as graduate students?

Hetherington: Yes. Well, we admit people according to clusters, so the developmental area and the clinical admit. And people can request a particular student but, I mean, if they're not in the top group you can't take them. So it doesn't matter if they want to work with you if they're not in the top half dozen. We try to spread them across different people but because of the kind of work I do with a lot of coding being done, I have a lot of undergraduates work with me on research. They very often start working with me in their second year and work with me all the way through. We try to rotate them through coding and data entry and then work them up to starting to work on data analysis. And a lot of

them do their undergraduate thesis on the project. But you know, at times I've had as many as 35 undergraduates working on research with me at one time because of the massive amounts of coding and data entry and data analysis work. But that is not what I view as desirable, and I don't like to have any more than eight graduate students work with me at a time. Six is ideal, I think; eight is too many, but eight is my absolute upper limit.

Borstelman: They can get lost.

Hetherington: They sure can get lost, and if one or two are not really strong students and you really have to lead them step by step it can be very difficult. Also, I'm in a lot of committees where I'm not the major professor too, and I take that very seriously; I go over their dissertations and work just like I would my own and try to help them with their writing and styles. I've--probably because of my background in English and the fact that my father pushed me very strongly to be a good writer--I've been interested in editorial things and writing and I really try and train my students to write well. Some of them come in and it's like they're translating from a foreign language their writing is so bad. And the advanced students always warn new students, "Now don't get upset when you get your first assignment from Mavis back," because I just write till it's black, every page is just black. And they kid me cause I write over their text, so I mean they can't read it. Every page, every page is just black with rewriting and comments, but most of them come out being able to write pretty well at the end.

Borstelman: I find that I can't read anything without editing as I go.

Hetherington: Yes. So I've been--you know, I really don't like academic writing styles.

Borstelman: No, it's terrible.

Hetherington: And I say, "Try and write the way you talk," and sometimes I think that my writing style is too conversational and looks unprofessional. It doesn't look hard-nosed enough because I try to paint a picture and try to tell a story about these families and the differences in the life experiences of these families.

Borstelman: Has that been a problem for you in getting published?

Hetherington: No, it hasn't.

Borstelman: Ah there is the lesson, there is the lesson.

Hetherington: It hasn't, but you can do that in book chapters much more than in journals. So that's certainly--

Borstelman: Incidentally, you've done a good deal of editorial board work.

Hetherington: Yes. I think you really owe it to the field to do editorial board work and grant reviewing; even though I found grant reviewing, if you did it conscientiously, to be tremendously time consuming. If you don't do it, power hungry incompetents will take over in those committees. So I think it's, you know, very important for people to do their service in these roles.

Borstelman: Along this line about research grants, how have you found all the funding resources in your area of interest and work? How has that gone, I mean?

Hetherington: Fine, I've never had difficulties with funding. In fact, I think now good grants do get turned down because of lack of resources. And I think it's--

Borstelman: Do you think that plays harder on younger people?

Hetherington: Yes, I think it's harder on younger people. Although, you know, I really--people will often use an excuse and say, I mean I've heard women say, “Oh, you can't get money to study women's issues.” And I think, well, you know, I think the things I study involve women's issues and I think you can get money to study almost anything that's good science, especially if it has any kind of practical applications. So now I think if people are really working in areas having to do with gender differences, with achievement, with abuse, with poor families, poverty, substance abuse, crime--I mean, I think you can get funded if you're a good scientist. I also think a lot of people who don't work well, don't work hard enough, are not careful enough, or don't take criticism very well will use prejudice as an excuse. So people from small colleges will say, “Well, I can't get my work published because as soon as they see the small college on it they downgrade the paper.” But reviews are done blind in most of our journals; they never see the small college on the front page. I think there's very little bias in reviewing. In fact, most of the studies that have been done using real journal data report that journals haven't found discrimination against or any difference in the number of acceptances when you do blind review and open review.

Borstelman: Have you found that--and this may vary over time, after all you've been working on this kind of stuff for at least 20 years (that is the divorce and family stuff). Do you find at any point in that career and in that work that certain funding sources are more receptive than others? Or have you sought selectively for your funding?

Hetherington: Well, I've been supported by the McArthur Foundation, NICHD, and NIMH.

Borstelman: Across the bridge.

Hetherington: You sort of frame what you're looking at a little differently if you go to NIMH versus NICHD, but I've been very widely supported. I've also headed a lot of training programs and that big post-doctoral family consortium, multi-sight training program, and I have not had trouble getting money for training programs either. I mean, I think it's out there. You get to the point--I mean you must feel this sometimes--where you feel like you're going stale. And I remember when Dad was about--I must have been about 60, so Dad was about 85. And I said, “You know Dad, I'm getting so sick of psychology.” And I said, “I've always wanted to be an architect, and I really would like to go into architecture,” and he said, “Well honey, if you live as long as I do you have lots of time for a second career.” And that just typified his support, you know. Here I am at 60 talking about going into architecture. He thought it was terrific and that had always been his attitude: go for it you, can do it. But that just--when he was 85, “If you live as long as I do...”

Borstelman: That's wonderful.

Hetherington: I feel considerable concern about the field of psychology. I think a lot of our research is very narrow and very self-indulgent. I know that academic research is justified by saying, you know, knowledge for the sake of knowledge is what’s important.

Borstelman: Which translated loosely means, “I do what I want to do.”

Hetherington: That's right, but I'm not sure funding agencies are going to think knowledge for the sake of knowledge is important indefinitely. I think there is a real schism in psychology that's a little different than the schism that used to be the experimental learning people versus the clinicians. This is a real stylistic thing where, I mean, there's been a big move for psychologists to work on social policy and to work setting up programs like Head Start by starting out with a research base, but doing the next step of trying to apply it in a practical way. There's also been a tremendous move away from little samples of convenience and basing a science based on the college sophomore toward trying to get more representative samples and work with larger databases.

Borstelman: Even beyond university preschools.

Hetherington: That's right, that's right. And there's a lot of resistance in psychology toward the idea of doing secondary data analysis of extant databases. Although in fields like sociology, economics, or political science this would be routine. We have many people who say, “Oh no, oh no, you've got to collect your own data.” And yet, you collect data on such a small and unrepresentative sample that it can't generalize to anything. I also think in psychology we're so hung up on not capitalizing on chance findings, unlike in biology where they think the worse thing in the world would be to have a finding there and miss it. We set such stringent standards that we threw up these things and caused hang-ups in our beliefs about what good research is and what appropriate data analysis is and what real science, hard science versus soft science is, and I think much of our research is getting so esoteric and so removed from the real world.

Borstelman: Precious.

Hetherington: It's precious. It is precious research, and I think that many of us are looked on by other social scientists as sort of self-indulgent flakes.

Borstelman: You know they've got a point, at least for a fair sampling of us. Yes, yes, indeed I share that.

Hetherington: And involved in trivia.

Borstelman: Yes. Yes.

Hetherington: And so I have concern about the future of psychology. I can see us, because we are such a disparate science and I don't think this is necessarily bad, getting swallowed up in other fields. And I don't think it’s necessarily a bad thing, but you know, I have no more in common with some of my colleagues. In fact, I have less in common with some of my colleagues than I do with some sociologists. I just think the field has become so fragmented that over the long run I think we may end up without a field of psychology.

Borstelman: Well you know, I wonder sometimes whether that, given the sheer expansion of psychology, it becomes almost inevitable.

Hetherington: I don't think it's a bad thing. You know, maybe we shouldn't have fields like sociology and psychology; maybe we should just have something with a big label like behavioral science and have behavioral slash social scientists and have them all working together and doing their thing and forming interest clusters. One cluster might be interested in psychology and the law, one cluster might be interested in learning, but it would include people in education who are interested in reading.

Borstelman: I've always found it terribly ironic that as basically important as the field of learning has been to psychology, it has practically nothing to do with education; I just find that very bizarre.

Hetherington: It's ludicrous. You know, you find a few people who go out and try and apply things in the classroom. Ann Brown does, but not many of them, not many of them at all. So I don't know where psychology is going to be even 25 years from now.

Borstelman: Well, it's as though there’s a difference within psychology of those who truly live in the ivy tower, you know, and those who live more in the world.

Hetherington: I’m always amused when researchers say about social programs dealing with poverty, child abuse, or drug abuse, “Oh, we can't put those programs in because we haven't done the research; we don't have the database.” You know, the problems are there and you can't just sit around and wait 20 years until we get an adequate database. There are real problems so we have to work as well as we can. You know, one of the things that always worries me is when psychologists will say, "Well I’m not

absolutely sure of that," but they know more than anybody else. They might as well get involved in social policy and in programmatic things, even if they aren't absolutely sure because they know more than anybody else does.

Borstelman: Where do you see a professional group like SRCD standing nowadays with relation to this question?

Hetherington: Well, are we going to talk about SRCD a bit?

Borstelman: Sure, why not?

Hetherington: Ok. Ok.

Borstelman: I don't want to distract you from what you were getting at.

Hetherington: This is sort of related; when I was president of SRCD one of the biggest issues was how much we wanted to get involved in social policy. That was the time when Alberta Segal and Harold Stevenson did the book in the child development series on social policy, but there's always been a great reluctance of scientific societies to work on this. In Russian science it was assumed that you would do your basic science and then you'd do an application; this was the logical step.

Borstelman: It was your responsibility to the state.

Hetherington: It was your responsibility to the state to do it, and we have none of that. Even when we have information that could help the people and that could be applied; we don't make that extra effort to apply it. We say, "Well I'm a basic researcher; I don't care if what I know about spatial learning and cognitive maps could help people design better road maps; I'm a basic researcher." I think maybe we should design better road maps.

Borstelman: We could start a whole new field of psycho-design.

Hetherington: Right, I think we should try. I went into psychology because I wanted to help people. I know it's viewed as corny; you don't say that if you're a scientist, but my motivation has always been to help people and to do research that I thought would be helpful. I work in divorce because I saw it as something that had a profound effect on the lives of parents and children.

Borstelman: And society.

Hetherington: And it had getting knowledge about factors that either contributed adversely to the outcomes of divorce or that helped protect people and helped lead them to salutary outcomes; I think it was very important to me. So I get very impatient at people who somehow think it's not real science if you want to go ahead and apply it. I think we're going to get into real trouble because of how esoteric things have gone. When I was president this was a big issue: Did we want to get into social policy or not? Now, I think they've accepted the role more in social policy, although not in lobbying which--

Borstelman: Not in--?

Hetherington: Lobbying, but certainly involved in recommending programmatic things having to do with social policy, and I think they should do that.

Borstelman: Well, you know Head Start is an excellent example of what I see as the demands for social actions far outrunning the knowledge basis. What did we have to work with then; we measured IQ, which was really, if you stop to think about it, not even a pertinent--

Hetherington: Why don't you measure how it reduces parenting stress to have the kids out of the house?

Borstelman: Exactly. Things like that.

Hetherington: I think our professional organizations can help a lot in that way. But I think our educational institutions are so rigid and reactionary that--

Borstelman: Yes academics, a lot of academics are very strongly in favor of change, except for when it has to do with what they do.

Hetherington: That's right. Exactly. Lloyd that's it, that's exactly it. But I think that SRCD has played a very important role in developing behavioral science related to children and encouraging people to look at how important childhood is.

Borstelman: But how do you see that it has done that?

Hetherington: I think it has done that; partly, I think the meetings are wonderful. I think there's also been a lot of involvement, for instance, in the journal with trying to include young people in the review process. I think there's been a lot; with the journals there has been a lot of very detailed feedback that goes back and tries to help people. I think that the society has been very active with things like its congressional fellowship programs that I thought were wonderful and with their summer workshops where they had a variety of people involved. I think they really worked very hard. I'm a bit concerned now that the society has gotten so big that it has lost the sense of intimacy and personal involvement. Like I couldn't even tell you who's now on council or who's on pub board, and at one time I always knew that. But it's getting sort of like APA was 20 years. It's about that--

Borstelman: When did you start participating in SRCD? What period of your--?

Hetherington: Oh, very early on.

Borstelman: We're talking here about early 60's or earlier than that?

Hetherington: Oh, yes. And I viewed it as--I always found APA conventions too big; I don't enjoy them. So I like the intimacy of the SRCD ones and the fact that even as a young scholar I could go and I would meet people who were very important people in the field, and they would sit and talk to me. I was very appreciative of that and now I have been very actively involved in the Society for Research in Adolescence, which again is a--

Borstelman: A new one.

Hetherington: An attempt to build--and I have been president of that--it's an attempt build a more intimate kind of focused group.

Borstelman: Looking back over say the last 30 years of your involvement of SRCD, what do you see as some of the changes or shifts that have happened in addition to just the sheer growth that's gone on in the organization with the size of it?

Hetherington: Well, the greater involvement in social policy is one as is the attempt to be more sensitive and responsive to the issues of minorities, which I think we are not all together successful in doing. I think that--

Borstelman: Now do you mean in terms of--?

Hetherington: Including them on boards, including them on committees; we certainly have more than we've ever had before.

Borstelman: But how have we done? And I guess I speak beyond SRCD itself. How have we done in terms of multi-cultural kinds of interests in our work and our research?

Hetherington: Well, I don't think it's a lack of interest. I think it's been, to some extent, because we've been told that we as white investigators are not allowed to investigate.

Borstelman: Yeah right, how can we understand? How can we possibly understand?

Hetherington: So I have been dying to first look at what a functional and dysfunctional marriage is in black and Hispanic families, but if I applied for a grant in that they would laugh me out of town. I've also wanted to study divorce in black and Hispanic families.

Borstelman: You have an interesting pattern, at least in black families, down in Carolina that very often presents the grandmother (the mother's mother) raising that kid. The mother is off north, or where ever, working.

Hetherington: Well, sure. There is some work that suggests it may even be the great-grandmother, when you have multiple births so close together, who ends up caring for people. But anyhow, I think we have not done well; we don't know much about minority children and minority families and how minorities cope with stress. We have a lot of theories, but I mean you just look at Vonnie McLloyd. She did a wonderful review on unemployment and she's done other things on poverty. What she ended up doing was taking things like Glenn Elders' work and then trying to build her model, but it's based on data from white families. So no, we don't know, but one of the big problems is so many minority students only want to work with a minority mentor. This is where I was saying I thought this mentoring bit could get destructive and even with women working only with female mentors; there aren't enough minority mentors.

Borstelman: That's right.

Hetherington: Also many of the minority mentors are very young; they are not more experienced people in the field. And I think we've got to work together on it. I mean, even though there may be differences in the way different family groups function, many of the methods you use and some of the questions you ask may be very similar. And it isn't as if research on one group is totally irrelevant to research on another as at least you have methods, at least you have certain kinds of frameworks that may start you out and then you may go in a different direction. You want to ask questions you think are unique to that group and build models, but you've got to start somewhere. And it's not like you want to throw out all the research that's ever been done on children and families because it wasn't done on a black or an Asian or a Hispanic family. There is something about the methods that we have in those, something about dimensions that may be a functioning that may be relevant to different kinds of things. I think we've gotten caught in a "Catch 22". I mean, I'm a little sick of hearing that the reason we haven't done work on minority families is because we are not interested in them; it's because we are not allowed to do research on them.

Borstelman: That's right. That's ironic. Talk about partisan politics.

Hetherington: Yeah, I think the politicizing of science is a dreadful thing, and I think all of science is highly politicized now.

Borstelman: Well, let's see. We've covered a lot of ground in our time so far.

Hetherington: I wanted to talk a bit about John.

Borstelman: Yeah, I know you do…patience, patience. No, let's do that alright? Let me put the question to you. Namely, in these times with increasing interest and activity of women in professional roles, how have you personally found the whole business of balancing your very active professional role? Do you have a life; is there life outside of that? Is there such a thing for you as husband and children and so forth? How has that gone?

Hetherington: First, I've been very fortunate because my husband's been very supportive of my career; he's very proud of my career, and he enjoys my career. He says he just couldn't imagine coming home to a woman and talking about nothing but kids and diapers and that he enjoys the things I bring home from my career. I'm also very fortunate because John's very fond of children. In fact, he was better with infants than I ever was; I was a lot better with adolescents. But he loves, he's a touchy feely man, and he liked to carry the babies around. So he was wonderful with infants. I liked kids once I could read to them and talk to them much more. I adored adolescents; I just thought adolescents were great fun, whereas he got a little impatient so we were a nice balance in that way. I've always worked at least an 80 hour week, and I travel a great deal; he's never complained about me traveling. When he was ill I cut out all travel and stayed home, but he's never complained about my travel. When we were very young and the first child was born and we didn't have a lot of money, we still had more than most people because we had two careers. He said, "If you're going to have a career and we are going to have a family, we need full-time help even if it means sacrificing in other things so we may not be able to have some other luxuries. So we had full-time help while the children were growing up. And the first woman who was with us was just a wonderful woman and was with us for 12 years. So she was there through the children's infancy; she was wonderful.

Borstelman: He resolved the super-woman problem for you.

Hetherington: That's right. It was terrific and my kids have been--although raising kids has both its gratifications and its stresses--they've been great fun. And certainly as I've grown older I've begun to think more and more how empty my life would have been with just a career and without my children because my children are just so fulfilling to me. Now, my life would have seemed pretty awful with just my family and no career too; I would never have made a good full-time, stay at home mum. I have a lot of need for excitement and change and meeting people; I love meeting people, and I love to travel. I love the feeling of going to the airport early in the morning when it's still dark or when I'll be somewhere like San Francisco driving through the darkened city streets and you hit the airport and it's bright lights and alive and I can just feel my adrenaline pumping and I feel like that guy in the ad that goes leaping over suitcases; I love it. I'd love it if I could leap and dance through airports.

Borstelman: Yes, but he only sells small cars.

Hetherington: You know, I just feel like leaping and dancing; I love traveling and meeting different people.

Borstelman: Oh you're a party girl. That's what you are.

Hetherington: They talk about people that are high on sensation seeking scales. I would be off the scale. I just love it. So John's been very accepting of the fact that I really need this. I also-- and John does too--I also need space and time alone, and we are very careful to give each other time alone.

Borstelman: Room and space.

Hetherington: To do things that one of us is interested in and the other is not interested in. So that's been--

Borstelman: But there is a lot of sharing that goes on too.

Hetherington: Oh we love, we would rather--one of our problems now is although I like all this socializing in my work, we're so close as a couple that we've grown isolated as a couple. We'd rather spend time alone together than do anything else. I mean, when someone says a dinner party, or a cocktail party, I think, “Ah, that's going to screw up our weekend together.”

Borstelman: But you know, I think it’s not just you, or you and John, I think that’s more of--

Hetherington: --a good marriage as you get older.

Borstelman: I can remember when I was young in the game, and boy there was a lot of socializing going on and there isn't...

Hetherington: I mean we really spend our time alone. I was just saying Sunday I have to leave for this--I’m on a child abuse panel for the National Academy. I have to be up for a Sunday dinner meeting and I’m going to be gone Monday and Tuesday and I just got back from a New York meeting yesterday and, you know, I really want the weekends with John. I like coming home and even if we are doing parallel work at night, you know you go in and have a cup of coffee together and speak, but his support in being with him is just so powerful to me. One of the things that's been our salvation is having our island in Canada where we spend about seven weeks every summer. When the kids were young and we were both trying to build our careers, we would go up to the island in rags in June. But you know when you spend time on an island together with no telephone and no TV, you do things together all the time. We would come back the most cohesive, harmonious, well-functioning model family in the world and that time in the summer would sustain us. We would get more stressed out during the academic year and then that would be our little oasis.

Borstelman: Do your sons still join you during the summer.

Hetherington: Yes, they always try.

Borstelman: Are any of them married?

Hetherington: Not yet, but two are engaged. So--

Borstelman: Well, you know that's another thing that's different I think with the next generation, they are getting married later. My kids all married; well my impulsive daughter married fresh out of college at 22. But the three boys married in their early 30's.

Hetherington: Yes, I think that's what is going to happen. And I mean they bring their girlfriends up to the bay or they always come home for Christmas and their girlfriends will often follow so the girls can spend Christmas with their families and come here for New Years.

Borstelman: Do you look forward to having daughters?

Hetherington: You know it's funny. I didn't want daughters when I was having children. Now I look at my friends with daughters and the kind of special intimacy mothers and daughters have and I envy them; I really envy them.

Borstelman: I ask that about your potential daughters-in-law because Jean's mother who is very fond of her talked about her first four children and her second four children, which I thought was a nice way of putting it and indeed that is the way she relayed it to us.

Hetherington: Well, you know the two boys that are engaged, I like their girls very much. No, I--no, I wish I had at least one daughter now.

Borstelman: Yes, a very close friend of Shirley and therefore a good friend of mine, has three sons all of whom are at this point around 20 or just a little older, they were close together. And this woman was meant to have daughters and she has none. It's that sort of thing. So I think she looks forward to it; she hopes her sons will get with it.

Hetherington: How are we doing for time?

Borstelman: Well it's 3: 30ish. Wait, I'm reading my clock wrong, was I right? No I'm reading it right.

Hetherington: It's about 25 minutes to 4. Do you have anything else you want to discuss?

Borstelman: I don't think so. We've covered a bit of ground.

Hetherington: Yes, we really have.

Those who inspired and were influenced by E. Mavis Hetherington:

Mentors
Leo Postman (Dissertation Advisor)
John McKee
Paul Mussen
Harrison Goff

Colleagues
Dorothy Eichorn
Diana Baumrind
Wanda Bronson
Lucy Rau Ferguson
Jack Block
Harold Jones
Dorothy Dinnerstein
Dan Laraman
Frances Braham
Lynn Berkowitz
Peter Lang
Barkley Martin
Jack Gilchrist
Harry Harlow
Lynn Berkowitz
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Peggy Hagen