

## SRCD ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

David R. Pederson

Interviewed by Lynne Zarbatany  
In London, Ontario, Canada  
December 20, 2005

**Zarbatany:** SRCD oral history interview. Interviewee is David R. Pederson. Interviewer is Lynne Zarbatany. London, Ontario, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2005. Okay. The first section is on your general intellectual history, so question number one: describe your family background along with any childhood and adolescent experiences that may be of interest. Include the education and occupational characteristics of your parents. Where were you born? Where did you grow up? What was your schooling like? Go ahead and begin and I'll ask again if you forget anything.

**Pederson:** Okay. I was born in Fargo, North Dakota to a single parent, welfare mother, and spent much of my early childhood up until roughly grade six in Fargo. And then for a variety of reasons, mainly my mother's health, moved to my aunt and uncle's farm near Fergus Falls, Minnesota, where I lived until I went off to university. May be of interest: I think that the--I think there are two things that shaped my early childhood in terms of the impact on my career. One was growing up in poverty and, therefore, being at least aware of or interested in the impact of economic stress on children's development. And the other was, I guess I would call it the protestant ethic, which was very strong in the Norwegian community I grew up in, that the biggest sin that one could imagine would be sloth, that--so that hard work was strongly encouraged.

**Zarbatany:** Okay. I'm just going to go back a bit, because you sort of leapt ahead to number two. So--

**Pederson:** I did? Oh, okay.

**Zarbatany:** It's okay. Can you tell me a little bit about what your schooling was like?

**Pederson:** Well, it was, particularly once I moved to the farm near Fergus Falls, Minnesota, went to a one room country school, and it certainly wasn't intellectually stimulating by any means. And then went to a very, very small high school. I think there were maybe 20-25 people in my graduating class. So again, I remember going off to university and realizing how incredibly poor my high school education was in terms of taking math courses and calculus courses and so forth.

**Zarbatany:** Okay. Now, did you have any military experience?

**Pederson:** I managed to avoid the military.

**Zarbatany:** And can you describe--

**Pederson:** I guess that's one advantage of growing up in a poor neighborhood, because there--many of my peers were eager to join the army as a way out of poverty.

**Zarbatany:** Can you describe your early work experience? I assume that would include your work on the farm.

**Pederson:** Yes, I worked on the farm, realized--

**Zarbatany:** And can you describe your work on the farm?

Pederson: I realized, and this was in northern Minnesota where it--and it was not a very fancy farm, but I realized that it would have taken maybe ten times as much money to establish myself in farming than it would be to go to university and get a PhD. And I simply didn't have the mechanical skills to be a farmer, so I--the choice was fairly obvious.

**Zarbatany: What were your chores on the farm just for the record?**

Pederson: Milk the cows by hand, and fed the chickens, and chased pigs around, and harvested the grain by hand.

**Zarbatany: By hand?**

Pederson: Well, there was a binder, but you had to put it in what we call "shocks," in rows and so forth. So--

**Zarbatany: Okay. Now, the next question--and you spoke to this a bit earlier when you talked about your childhood experiences that affected your intellectual development, but can you describe any early adult experiences that were important to your intellectual development, including collegiate experiences?**

Pederson: Well, for me going to university was an incredibly liberating experience. The world of the intellectual life was something I really enjoyed, and I really enjoyed living in the dorm, talking about intellectual ideas. The school I went to was Augsburg College, which was a Lutheran college, and many of my friends were headed into the seminary. So we had great theological discussions, reading Karl Niebuhr and Paul Tillich and all the great theologians, so that was a door opening into the intellectual life and the idea of--and the world of ideas, and that there were many very, very passionate and great teachers at Augsburg. In many ways that was a much more stimulating--intellectually stimulating environment than either--yeah, after--in my second and third--the third and fourth years I went to the University of Minnesota, and that was not nearly as intellectually vibrant as Augsburg College was.

**Zarbatany: It's neat that you had that experience. Okay. Now, what are the origins of your interests in child development and what individuals were important to your intellectual development?**

Pederson: I got interested in psychology because my cousin's husband was a psychologist working for the local mental hospital. And I remember he gave me two books: he gave me Freud's--this was when I was in high school--Freud's *Introduction to Psychoanalysis* and then he gave me a book--I can't remember the author--but it was on psychotherapy called *The 50 Minute Hour*. And I read both of them with great fascination and I think at that point--from then on my heart was set on being a--at least being a psychologist. And my introduction of course was through my cousin's husband in clinical psychology. I got interested in developmental psychology because at the University of Minnesota I took a course in child development that was taught by Bill Hartup, who was a professor then at Iowa, but he was visiting Minnesota. It was before he moved to Minnesota. And Bill was not the most stellar lecturer, but he--and this was a huge class--he took an interest in me. I'm not sure why. And invited me--what they had was a voluntary what they called "honor seminar" where you got to meet the graduate students, and they told you what--showed you what they were doing in terms of their research and I got to meet the other faculty, and so it was really Bill's mentoring that got me really interested in developmental psychology. And I'd applied to the clinical program at the University of Minnesota, and at that time the first step was to do the Miller's analogy. Well, of course, growing up in the backwater in northern Minnesota doing analogies of words I'd never heard of before--needless to say I didn't even get to the first step in my application to the clinical program. I was quite devastated. I thought for sure my life was over. But Bill--again, it wasn't that I approached him. He approached me, and said, "Well, are you interested in graduate school?" And I said, "Well, I don't think I'll get in anywhere, because I applied to Minnesota here and didn't make it." And he gave me a lecture about, you know, the strategies of applying to graduate schools and said, "If you're interested in

developmental you should apply at Iowa and apply at Cornell,” and gave me this orientation that I had never thought of before and encouraged me to apply to a number of schools. But I--since Bill was going back to Iowa, applied only to Iowa and fortunately was accepted there. So it’s interesting reflecting back on Bill’s influence.

**Zarbatany: I don’t think I ever knew this story.**

Pederson: I feel very grateful to him.

**Zarbatany: So who would you consider to be your research mentors?**

Pederson: Well, my graduate supervisor was Gordon Cantor. And I think if I was going to pick somebody as a mentor I would say that he was. I think he was more of a mentor in the art of writing, which was certainly a challenge for me, and spent lots and lots of time giving me feedback and fostering my writing skills. I remember--well, my recollection of graduate school was I think--I’m not sure I would have articulated it this way then, but there was a sense of somehow is this all there is, what is going on here, when am I going to learn psychology? Because when I was at Iowa the--this was in the heyday of Hull Spence theory and the Institute of Child Behavior at Iowa was very, very strongly behaviorist, and very strongly Spencian, of course, because Spence was in the Psych Department. And so the approach was essentially to try and apply Hull Spence theory to children’s behavior. And it seemed almost in retrospect like the idea was if you can get kids to behave like rats then you have succeeded in some way, so you had to be clever in constructing experiments so that kids would behave in a way analogous to rats. But I mean in many ways it was intellectually stimulating. It was an intellectually challenging task, but it wasn’t particularly rewarding in the sense of having a sense of fulfillment of understanding children’s development.

**Zarbatany: So, I don’t know if I’m allowed to ask you this, but have you had other research mentors since graduate school who have shaped your intellectual development?**

Pederson: Well, I think that--I can think of three people that had big influences on me. One certainly is Mary Ainsworth. She--although I didn’t have a mentoring relationship with her, I certainly read about her ideas. I think a profound mentoring experience in terms of my intellectual life was her 1969 paper in *Child Development* where she essentially introduced or compared learning theory, psychoanalytic theory and attachment theory, and that was my introduction to attachment theory. And there was a sense for me of, well, this makes so much sense, and this is so exciting. And I’m not sure what year it was. It was in maybe mid ‘70s. There was a--Merrill Palmer Institute in Detroit had a yearly meeting on infant studies, and they would invite people to give talks, and then there would be a chance to discuss their talks. And Mary Wright, who was the chairman of this department when I was hired and was still chair then I think, drove us to the Merrill Palmer Institute, some of us in developmental psychology to the Merrill Palmer Institute, and Mary Wright was a schoolmate and friend of Mary Ainsworth, so they were rooming together. And I spent one evening getting this private tutorial from Mary Ainsworth about what attachment theory was and how it was different from learning theory, and so I got to ask her all kinds of questions about attachment theory, and so that was really, really exciting. And the second person that, again, that influenced me maybe more by reading than direct influence was Alan Sroufe. He wrote a paper on attachment as an organizational construct with Everett Waters, and again, contrasted attachment theory with fundamental learning theory. So--and I also spent a week at Minnesota, it must have been in the late ‘70s, at one of his summer Strange Situation coding courses. And by the far most important more--and this is more recent influence in my intellectual life--is Mary Main and her thinking about both attachment as organization and attachment in adulthood and her thinking about attachment theory. So I would say that those three people have fostered my interest in the research that I have done for the last 15 years or so.

**Zarbatany: And have you had significant colleagues, for example, who have contributed to your intellectual development?**

Pederson: Colleagues?

**Zarbatany: For example, your relationship with your research partner?**

Pederson: I'm trying to think of earlier on. And of course, the most obvious research colleague is Greg Moran. But I think my early time here at Western after I--Western was my first--I guess maybe we'll get to that in terms of where I worked--but Western was a place I went to immediately after my PhD, and I think that there was a number of years where I was kind of stumbling around not sure of what I was going to do or why I was doing what I was doing. And around the time that Greg and I began to collaborate, Greg Moran and I began to collaborate, what we had in common was an interest in mother/infant relationships and the naturalistic observation of mother/infant relationships. Greg's background is in animal ethology, and his training is quite different from mine in that he was trained as an ethologist, trained to observe behavior and describe behavior in as natural an environment as would be possible. His dissertation was on social interaction of wolves, and so that the principals of the ethological roots of attachment theory were quite natural to him. I don't think he had to go through this purging that I had to of forgetting about the behaviorism I learned and begin to ponder how to describe interactions in a natural environment. So Greg certainly was an important intellectual colleague. I think that you, Lynne Zarbatany, have been a very, very important friend and support person to me. We haven't collaborated as much as maybe either one of us would have liked to, but certainly you have been there socially and emotionally for me over the--how many years have we worked together?

**Zarbatany: 21.**

Pederson: 21 years that we've worked together, so--

**Zarbatany: Well, that's very kind. Okay. Now, what political and social events have influenced your research and writing would you say?**

Pederson: Well, other than an interest in children at risk I'm not sure I can think of any--again, an interesting question that I've been quite involved in the world of politics and of social movements, but I'm not sure I can say that they've influenced my research career.

**Zarbatany: Okay. Would they have influenced your teaching in any way do you think?**

Pederson: I certainly wanted undergraduates to understand developmental process, and particularly the role of environmental stressors on the developmental process, and wanted to encourage them to accept responsibility for change or what they can do to make the world a better place.

**Zarbatany: Okay. Now, I think you've partially answered this next question, but just to be more systematic about it would you characterize the development of your ideas in the field of child development as evolving in a rather straightforward fashion or in a way that involved sharp turns in theoretical or research style?**

Pederson: It's probably closer to the sharp turn end of that dimension. As I said earlier, I got interested in being a psychologist when I was in high school and through the influence of my cousin's husband. And I think my idea of what psychology was was strongly influenced by reading Freud and also reading this book on therapy, and that's what I thought psychology was. And so going to University of Minnesota where at that time--this would be in the early, early '60s--Skinnerian psychology was very strong at Minnesota. And there was a sense of taking these courses and it was very interesting that you could get rats to press a bar if they got food. It's kind of what I understood chickens to do on the farm, that they would do things for food. But it didn't seem like the psychology I was interested in. And so there was a sense for me of--and some of the studies that were being done in the Institute seemed like they were getting close, at least they were interested in--one of the projects was on imitation and the role of imitation and the acquisition of aggressive behavior. And so it seemed like it

was getting a little closer to real life things, but most of it was fairly abstract, and so I thought, well, if I go to graduate school then they'll, you know, they aren't going to tell undergraduates this stuff. They'll tell graduate students this stuff. And I went, as I said, went to Iowa and learned that rats run down a particular maze in a certain way if they get food, and if you're clever you can get a child to act in an analogous way if they get some kind of reward. But it wasn't very satisfying in the sense of understanding human behavior, and so this was what was--when I began to read about attachment theory this became a lot closer to--well, this is interesting that Bowlby's book--I remember getting Bowlby's book in 1969 and being really excited about, wow, this is why kids smile, this is interesting, or this is how you'd explain or be interested in studies of looking preference put in a broader context, or this is, you know, the rewards and sort of signaling, and reading Ainsworth early studies there was a sense of, oh, this is getting exciting. And so slowly my interest and understanding of how to do research on attachment developed. I think the big--what was the phrase you--sharp turn, for me these are kind of wiggly turns moving away and going out of being a behaviorist. I think the big sharp turn came much later. It came in 1990, when I took Mary Main's Adult Attachment Interview Institute, a two-week training course, and there was this suddenly, like, oh this is what psychology is about. You listen to what people say, and wonder why they said it, and wonder why they chose these particular words and what would be the meaning of this utterance. And so that those two weeks there was kind of like--it was like the previous part of my training was all in preparation for this. It was just, wow, this is what psychology really is about.

**Zarbatany:** So that sent you in a--at a 90 degree angle or--

Pederson: Well, I think it allowed me to--I think for me it was a real understanding of what attachment theory was, and what the, if you will, meta--how different in many fundamental ways from certainly learning theory and behaviorism, in its--not only in its theoretical explanations, but its methodology.

**Zarbatany:** It sounds like your graduate training was a diversion from the quest.

Pederson: That's true.

**Zarbatany:** Okay. Okay. Let's move onto the next section, which is your personal research contributions. Okay. Beginning with number one, what were your primary interests in child development at the beginning of your career?

Pederson: Well, early on I was--my dissertation was about the influence of frustration on children's response speed. And so early on I continued, because it was easy to do and I could generate studies, I continued that, but ultimately--I can understand now why if you ask undergraduates who Kenneth Spence was you get a blank look, or if you ask I think even graduate students who Kenneth Spence was you get a blank look unless they happen to have taken a history course, and maybe not even then. So it's--the theory was crumbling, the approach was crumbling, and I was looking for other things in terms of research ideas. And I think for maybe reasons that were more personal than professional I was interested in children's play. I think watching my own kids in the early preschool and preschool era and the fascination about how they organize their play, and the complexity of play introduced me to this realm of, well, what's play about and how does it work. And so I spent a number of years examining play and pondering about what play was about and then was--I think I couldn't really let go of my behaviorist background enough to really get into the creative study of play, and so that as I began to collaborate with Greg and we began to become interested in observing mother/infant relationships, and describing mother/infant relationships, and learning more and more about attachment constructs that that's where--there was a sense I finally found a sense of home in terms of my both intellectual and research career.

**Zarbatany:** Okay. What continuities in your work are most significant, and what shifts occurred?

Pederson: I think--I'm not sure there was a lot of continuity.

**Zarbatany: Well--**

Pederson: But I guess the--yeah, you want to prompt me?

**Zarbatany: No, go ahead.**

Pederson: I guess the continuity would be an interest in doing research, that there's even--when I was a graduate student at Iowa and early in my career, academic career, that there was a sense of unease about what's the significance of this research. There was still something exciting about the ideas and about, well, how would you test these ideas, so that there--and that's still true today in terms of--so that the intellectual excitement has always been there. So that's the continuity. The discontinuity has been the search for more theoretical framework that's more compatible with the way I see the world and methodologies that capture what I believe to be important.

**Zarbatany: Were there any precipitating events that prompted a shift in research focus?**

Pederson: Well, the precipitating--I'm not sure it was an event, but it was kind of the sense of, well, what's the meaning of my research? Where is this going? And didn't--couldn't really answer that question very confidently until I started studying relationships.

**Zarbatany: Okay. Okay. Now we need you to reflect on the strengths of your research and theoretical contributions, the impact of your work and its current status.**

Pederson: Oh.

**Zarbatany: If you want to break that down, how about just talking about the strengths of your research and theoretical contributions first?**

Pederson: This feels like a question that the people ten years from now can address rather than me addressing them now.

**Zarbatany: Well, they'll be interested in your reflections on--**

Pederson: That's true.

**Zarbatany: --your perceptions of the strengths of your research.**

Pederson: I think one area of contribution that I'm proud of is the development of ways of observing what Ainsworth talked about as "maternal sensitivity," understanding that construct and what Ainsworth meant by it, and how do you go about observing sensitivity in a way that is congruent with her ideas about what sensitivity is. And so I think one thing that I have learned over the years in terms of studying sensitivity was to learn from mistakes, and the nice thing about the study of sensitivity is that you can--the outcome variable is readily apparent, that there's--you can say, "Well, this is a good measure because it predicts security in a Strange Situation," and if it doesn't it isn't a good measure. And so that by doing home observations and saying, "Wow, I think this mum is incredibly sensitive," and then seeing that baby and mom in a Strange Situation and seeing that they are not secure or not in a secure relationship, it makes you go back and say, "Well, what happened? What did we do wrong?" in the sense of what were we missing, so that there were I think a number of times where that was so salient of--I remember one mom who was--turned her home into a teaching machine. She was just--I mean, the kid was very bright, there was some sense of--and the mom was very devoted to this kid, and we came away from the home visit thinking, well, you know, the mom was a little bit over the top in terms of her pushing the kid, but boy, you can't knock the results. And part of our procedure was to give a Bailey exam, and the kid was just a whiz at all of the Bailey questions and tasks that we gave. And the kid was--you wouldn't have to have taken a course in how to code the Strange Situation to see

that this kid was in an avoidant relationship. The kid was clearly avoidant, ignored the mom, and the mom got very anxious and started being intrusive and trying to get the kid to respond to her. So there was a sense of, well, what did we miss and going back over it and thinking about it more that the focus was purely on the intellectual and not on the emotional. And so that's one big lesson; pay attention to what--for example, in reviewing our notes one of the things we noted was that when the baby did something on the Bailey that was a success he would smile at one of us rather than at mom. And you know, looking back now we, you know, now we would know better and we would say, "Well, this kid is--the relationship is only based on the intellect and not on the emotions," in noting how the baby responds to us rather than to the mom would be--so I think that that carefully both noting successes obviously and what works, but also in learning from what hasn't worked so well has led to--I think I'm quite proud of how we have learned to assess sensitivity.

**Zarbatany: In terms of the impact of your work, can you reflect on its impact? Have other people learned the same lessons let's say?**

Pederson: I think one of the weaknesses in my career is I haven't been a particularly good salesperson, and I think looking back on it I think I was quite naïve. I thought, well, if you publish interesting findings that people will read it and say, "Wow, this is great," and adopt the methods. And it doesn't work that way, that you have to in some way be a better salesperson of your findings, and I think we have been. So it is interesting that people who have adopted our methods have, like German Posada, have replicated our findings so that there is a sense that it isn't just a phenomena that we know how to go about doing, but that I don't think we have been as aggressive as we should have been perhaps in pushing our methodology.

**Zarbatany: Okay. And can you comment on the current status of your research and theoretical contributions?**

Pederson: Well, what we're interested in, the problem we're interested in and wrestling with is the question of the development of disorganization, what aspects of the mother's behavior is related to the infant's disorganization, and why does she engage in those behaviors?

**Zarbatany: This is disorganization from an attachment perspective?**

Pederson: Yes, from the disorganized attachment relationship. And so that's what's driving our current work. The question was about the impact of it. I think--

**Zarbatany: Well, what's the current status--**

Pederson: Well, that's our focus now. This came out of a study with adolescent mothers that we started some years ago, and at--up until then I had been studying mothers, either middle class mothers or mothers whose infants were at risk mainly through prematurity, but hadn't really studied a group of mothers at social risk. And we learned a lot about social risk and about trauma and about attachment disorganization in the study of adolescent mothers, and it really introduced me to this problem of the role of trauma and the second generation effect of trauma in terms of how mothers' behavior influences disorganization of her relationship with her infant. So that's what we're doing now is focusing on those problems.

**Zarbatany: Very interesting. Okay. What published or unpublished manuscripts best represent your thinking about child development?**

Pederson: I think that's a good question. What paper would I be proudest of? I think there are two. There's one paper, it's a paper we published in *Developmental Psychology*. It's our paper looking at the attachment state of mind from the AAI, the Strange Situation, assessments of the relationship and our home observations of maternal sensitivity, and--

**Zarbatany: Can you remember the year on that?**

Pederson: --maybe, was it '98? I'll have to correct it in the--I'll look it up and correct it in the transcript. It's strange; I can't remember the year. (*Developmental Psychology* 1998, 34, 925-933)

**Zarbatany: I can't remember most years.**

Pederson: No, it would have to be--well, it would be well after that. It must be maybe '96, because I took the AAI Institute in '90, and so it would be '96 or maybe even '98 by the time I got it published. We were--at the time there was in the mid '90s a review of the literature that Marinus van IJzendoorn did in looking at the relation between--a meta analysis looking at the relationship between AI and Strange Situation, and as part of that meta analysis he asked essentially the question, well, how is it that mothers who are autonomous have secure infants, what's the behavioral link? And the obvious answer would be that it would be sensitivity. And the available literature said it doesn't seem like sensitivity is a very effective mediator. And as we read that we said to ourselves, "Well, that's because no one else knows how to measure sensitivity." And so we were quite confident, van IJzendoorn called this a transmission gap, the gap between what's in the mother's mind and the relationship she established in a parent's mind and what's the relationship she establishes with her infant. And we said, "Well, obviously if you measure sensitivity correctly that you will solve this." And much to our surprise we found in that study that, again, as most people had, that state of mind is assessed on the adult attachment of Interview was strongly related to Strange Situation security, we found as we found in previous studies that sensitivity was strongly related to security in the Strange Situation, but sensitivity and autonomy in the AAI were only weakly related to each other, and therefore sensitivity couldn't function as a mediator. It was like they were two independent predictors of attachment security. And I think for me that was a very clear demonstration of what is still I think described as the transmission gap, that isn't simply a methodological problem, it's a real--there's something else going on. My friend, Ann Frodi in Sweden says, "Well, it vibes, David, it vibes, autonomous mothers just have good vibes, and the baby picks it up." But so far we haven't figured out how to measure--

**Zarbatany: How to measure vibes? Are there any other papers that you--**

Pederson: There was another paper. It came out of a dialogue with Susan Goldberg. Sue and I started a yearly summer institute here. Sue--it started because Sue was interested in folk music, and she said, "Well, I'm coming to London for this folk festival. Why don't I come a few days early and we can take some Strange Situation tapes that we're having difficulty with and reviewing them?" And we had so much fun doing it, and it was so stimulating that we continued it. It's still going on now some 15, 20 years later. And out of that, of course, we not only looked at coding, we also looked at theory and ideas. And we had these great discussions about Sue saying, "Well, if attachment theory is about fear, then shouldn't you be looking at how the mother handles the infant's fear? Isn't that what sensitivity's about? Shouldn't you be measuring that?" And Greg and I got--Greg Moran and I had a different perspective on what the driving force in attachment--we said, "Well yes, fear is important in the development of attachment, but you need a broader perspective," and so we developed what we called a "relationship perspective," what you learn in your relationship with your caregivers is how to relate and how to control your affect and so forth. And so Sue wrote a paper that ultimately was published in *Family Psychology* and we were invited to write a commentary on it, so we had a chance to play out this discussion in that form.

**Zarbatany: The year?**

Pederson: Oh, the year? That would be fairly recent. I would think it would be maybe '99, somewhere in there. (*Journal of Family Psychology*, 1999, 13, 1-15)

**Zarbatany: Okay.**

Pederson: --that was recent--

**Zarbatany: You'll check and fix the transcript?**

Pederson: Yes, yes.

**Zarbatany: Okay. Did you make any contributions that you thought were wrong-headed looking back now?**

Pederson: I made contributions that I think are irrelevant in the sense of the early work on frustration.

**Zarbatany: But nothing you think that was--**

Pederson: I don't think--

**Zarbatany: --a mistake?**

Pederson: I don't think there was--I mean, we made mistakes, but if the mistakes were because we weren't sure of what we were doing, but we never published what I would call--there's no paper that I would say, "Oh my gosh, that shouldn't have been published."

**Zarbatany: Or that you were wrong and the data turned out to be otherwise?**

Pederson: Not that I--if so I've carefully repressed it.

**Zarbatany: Okay. Now, would you reflect on your experiences with the research funding apparatus over the years both as a recipient I guess and as a participant in shaping research funding policy, implementation and so on?**

Pederson: I think I've been fortunate for most of my career. I think there was one or two years perhaps where I didn't have research funding, so I've gotten along well with the research councils. I'm not sure I had much influence on them. I did serve on a couple of grant review committees, but I wouldn't want to claim that I had much impact on granting agencies.

**Zarbatany: Can you tell us what funding agency has funded most of your research or which ones?**

Pederson: Much of my research was funded--particularly the attachment research--was funded by Ontario Mental Health Foundation, particularly the work with high risk infants, premature infants, and more recently our work has been funded by Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

**Zarbatany: Okay. So are you okay to keep going, or do you want to take a break?**

Pederson: Sure. Let's finish this.

**Zarbatany: Okay. Your institutional contributions, the third section; in which institutions have you worked? And tell us the dates and capacities.**

Pederson: Well, that's going to be quite easy. Other than working for maybe six months at the University of Western Illinois the only institution I've worked at is the University of Western Ontario, and I started in 1965 and have retired in 2005.

**Zarbatany: Okay. The next question is not relevant. Okay. Can you describe your experiences as a teacher of child development research and/or a trainer of research work? What courses have you taught?**

Pederson: I've taught I think maybe in the first couple of years I might have participated in a section of introduction to psychology, but since then I've taught only developmental courses. So I've taught with you a course, a general introduction to development psychology to non-majors, which is a large course. I taught honors courses in introduction to developmental psychology and a variety of specialty courses, most of them in recent years have been on attachment theory in one form or another.

**Zarbatany: Also, teaching social and emotional development--**

Pederson: Oh yes.

**Zarbatany: --quite a few times.**

Pederson: There was also a course--actually enjoyed--that's--thank you for reminding me. I enjoyed teaching social and emotional development.

**Zarbatany: And at the graduate level it's been primarily attachment?**

Pederson: Primarily attachment, yes.

**Zarbatany: Okay. Now it says please comment on the tension between teaching and research in the field of child development. I'm not sure what that means.**

Pederson: I'm not sure either. I didn't experience any tension. Even the--I found the survey courses were very, very helpful in terms of keeping me up to date more or less on what is happening in other areas of developmental psychology, and giving me more of a developmental perspective than focusing quite narrowly on my own research. So I think it's been both intellectually--and in terms of fostering research I haven't felt a--other than teaching takes a lot of time--haven't felt a conflict.

**Zarbatany: Okay. Describe your experiences in so-called "applied child development" research or in applied work, and comment on your role in putting theory into practice.**

Pederson: Well, I think I've been quite reticent in getting into applied work. For funding purposes the teen mother study that we did had an intervention component, because that was a requirement of the granting agency. And that--so what we did was we had an intervention group of mothers in which we were trying to support their sensitivity and responsiveness, and ultimately their child's security in a comparison group. And in terms of the--that was, I think, the beginning for me of an appreciation of the challenges of the application of what we're doing. And I think for me rather than doing--saying my research is "applied" I think what I've been doing say the last few years has been training both students and others who are doing more applied work. All of our students in the last several years have been in the clinical program and are--most of them are interested in clinical careers or clinical research careers. And I think training those students has maybe been my contribution to applied research.

**Zarbatany: Okay. It's funny. They don't really ask about mentoring students, but okay. The next section, your experiences with SRCD, when did you join SRCD?**

Pederson: I should have looked at the--I think it was 1963. It was while I was still in graduate school, and I could have looked up the dates on the first journals, but I think it was '63.

**Zarbatany: What would you say your earliest contacts with the Society were and with whom?**

Pederson: I know--I did look this up--my first SRCD meeting was in 1965 in Minneapolis. I can't remember--frankly I can't remember much about those early meetings. The only thing I remember was going to these meetings and--well, two things I remember. One was the thrill of seeing somebody's nametag that seemed famous, and the other was the intellectual excitement. I remember having to

finally say after the second day, “Wait, you’ve got to--you can’t go to everything,” and so that the meetings for me have been very, very exciting and stimulating.

**Zarbatany: Have--**

Pederson: They’re strange to call it--for me, they’re strange to call it a meeting, because maybe it’s my personality, but I’m not sure that I’ve met people other than the people I already knew, so it was--that was one of the irritations I had with the meetings.

**Zarbatany: Okay. Describe the history of your participation in the scientific meetings and publications of the Society. You published in *Child Development*. I know that.**

Pederson: Yes, I’ve published in *Child Development*, been an invited editor for papers in *Child Development*. I’m not sure I have done anything else in terms of--until quite recently--in terms of SRCD governance or work of the Society. One thing that--coming out of my irritation of not being able to meet people, one of the things--and your description of what it’s like to have the peer preconference, the last couple of SRCDS I’ve helped organize preconferences so that people interested in attachment could meet, and that have, I think particularly in the last one, arranged it so that people could meet the--establish--the junior people could meet established people, and I’m feeling quite proud about a meeting at which the feedback I got was, “Wow, this is great, and we had a chance to meet and talk, got a chance to talk to so and so,” so--

**Zarbatany: Well, that’s one of the benefits of smaller group meetings.**

Pederson: Yes.

**Zarbatany: Would you say you’ve been a regular participant at the meetings over the years since you joined the Society?**

Pederson: Yes, I think I’ve only missed one meeting. I think there was a meeting in San Francisco, and I’m not sure what year it was, that I didn’t go to. Maybe it was the year I didn’t have research funding, so I didn’t get there, but other than that I’ve gone to every meeting.

**Zarbatany: Okay. I think we’ll skip number three, because I don’t think you--**

Pederson: No, I didn’t have--

**Zarbatany: --what do you believe are the most important changes to occur in SRCD and its activities during your association with it?**

Pederson: Well obviously, one change is it’s gotten a lot bigger. And it’s I guess therefore even more difficult to connect with people. I think it’s been very helpful--the shift into the use of posters, because there is an opportunity to talk to somebody about their work. In some way it would be better--it’d be good to get the more senior people to present posters, so that people could actually meet them. I remember Mary Main presented her work in a poster, and it was quite delightful watching people chat with Mary. So I think encouraging senior people to present posters might be a good move.

**Zarbatany: That’s a great idea. I hope they’re listening.**

Pederson: And the growth of the preconferences I think has also been something very helpful, that in many ways I’ve found the preconferences have been more interesting or exciting than much of what happens in the conference itself.

**Zarbatany: Okay. Now the next question is rather large. It speaks to your perspective on the field and changes that have occurred over your career. So please comment on the history of the field**

**during the years that you've participated in it, including major continuities and discontinuities and events related to these.**

Pederson: Wow, it is a big question. Well, I think the obvious change has been the decline of the role of learning theory and behaviorism. I think that's particularly true in developmental psychology. And I think that maybe transformation of Piagetian theory into a framework for studying cognitive development that is more focused on describing development and the changes in how children think than maybe the stage theory that Piaget articulated. Obviously for me the development of attachment theory and the interest in the ethological approach of studying relationships has been very important.

**Zarbatany: I was just thinking that, you know, in terms of--to narrow the field a bit in terms of parental contributions to development, maybe you can comment on how attachment theory has changed, how that has been conceived.**

Pederson: I think it's one of the--maybe the challenges in terms of certainly attachment theory has been its inability to find convincing contributions from the infant side of the relationship. That one would think that--and certainly one can easily imagine the contrary arguments--but from a naive perspective one would think that say from an evolutionary perspective that some babies are more viable than other babies, and so that it's to me quite surprising from an evolutionary perspective why, for example, the frequency of attachment security, the distributions of attachment security around premature infants are not different from infants who are healthy infants, that one wouldn't be surprised from an evolutionary perspective to find parents more rejecting or more frustrated with ill babies. And certainly that isn't the case, so that there are these intriguing unanswered questions.

**Zarbatany: --I think it's probably okay now.**

Pederson: Okay.

**Zarbatany: So you were saying that attachment theory hasn't helped conceptualize the child's contribution to the relationship.**

Pederson: And I think that I'm surprised that it's been so difficult to find infant contributions or for that matter genetic contributions to at least attachment security. There's some evidence, even there it's weak evidence, about the genetic contribution to disorganization or genetic correlates of disorganization. But--so maybe that's an unanswered question. Certainly in the field the question in terms of the broader field, certainly the--I think the field has slowly progressed from what might be a billiard ball view of development, that the parent hits--or a potters view of development, that the parent hits the ball and it goes in where the parent wants the ball to go, or the parent has this grand design about what kind of kid they want, and they shape it up like a potter with a piece of clay. And certainly in other areas of development process that clearly isn't the case. And I think that there is a healthy change in terms of looking at more of a systems perspective than was the case early on, although--

**Zarbatany: You're saying a child doesn't contribute--**

Pederson: --well, I think both parent and child that there is something about the dynamic between the two of them that it leads to some developmental processes. I think that that would--my sense is that we come back and look at descriptions of development ten years from now that it'll be much more of a systems point of view about here's the contribution of the parent, and here's the contribution of the child and how they interact.

**Zarbatany: Okay. What are your hopes and fears for the future of the field?**

Pederson: Well, I think my hope is--well, one of my hopes is that the understanding or ways of looking at the complexities of relationships in some way will evolve, that--so far, as I said earlier, so far those

of us doing research on attachment haven't found good ways of demonstrating the infant's contribution to the security of the relationship. And in spite of all kinds of--you know, at one point we were routinely including temperament measures in our data, but it never related to anything in any clear way in terms of attachment security, so we've given up. But it isn't that we've given up with the idea that the infant and the mother are in some dance and it takes two people to dance. And so understanding both the interactions of genetic contributions is probably not main effects, but somehow the interaction of the state of the mother and the state of the infant and how that works, I think that's going to be the exciting new area. And I think what is needed is maybe data analytic approaches and conceptual frameworks that take into account the complexities.

**Zarbatany: Okay. So now you have the opportunity to tell us some personal things about you. For example, about your interests and your family, and the ways in which they may have had a bearing on your scientific interests and contributions.**

Pederson: Let me first of all say a little bit about my family. I'm in a second marriage, and Deanne, my wife, and I have seven kids, adult kids. The youngest is in her mid 30s, and nine grandchildren thus far, and so that there's been this opportunity for us to watch the developmental process, and certainly watch the diversity of developmental processes. And I think a real privilege of--I think for me as a stepfather watching the triumphs of my stepchildren have been particularly sweet, because there isn't this sense of, well, I did it, or I should have done it this way. It's more of, wow, I can just celebrate who they are. So that certainly has been an opportunity to learn, particularly about diversity in our family. The other thing I would like to say about my personal interest in my family is that--is my relationship with my wife, Deanne, in that it's not only a good marriage in that we support each other, but we also recognize that our soul's work in this part of our life is to talk about--to talk to people about attachment theory. And so we get to teach adult attachment interview training courses where we get to meet all kinds of wonderful people, and get all kinds of wonderful connections. Or in--work together in--oh, for example, last week I was invited to give a lecture to the child psychiatrists in the city, the residents in child psychiatry in the city. Deanne said, "I'll come along and give you a little support," and we had a great time doing it together. So it was her interest, and skills and application and my knowledge of theory and research complement each other fine--in a fine way. So we're having a grand time doing that. I think that probably does it.

**Zarbatany: So is there anything else you would like to have recorded for posterity in terms of your experience as an academic and--**

Pederson: Well, one question that you pointed out that wasn't--maybe it was addressed and we-- maybe I skipped it in terms of answering--was the role of being a mentor to graduate students and how marvelous this is in terms of its--in many ways it's like being a parent, but without all of the responsibility, that you see these young folks enter graduate school being quite timid and unsure of themselves, and foster their both research and intellectual and personal development, and see them come out as incredibly fine confident young people. It's been, it's--I think that is a thrill for me in my career, has been mentoring students and watching their development both in graduate school and after graduate school.

**Zarbatany: Do you how many you've graduated?**

Pederson: No. You probably have a better fix on that, because you counted them.

**Zarbatany: Yes, okay.**

Pederson: But--

**Zarbatany: Well--**

Pederson: --we can--we'll add that--

Zarbatany: We'll add that to the transcript.

Pederson: Thanks, Lynne.

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