

Eleanor Emmons Maccoby

- Born 05/15/1917 in Tacoma, WA
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- Ph.D. and M.A. from the University of Michigan (1950 and 1949); B.S. from Reed College/University of Washington-Seattle (1939)

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SRCD ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Eleanor Maccoby

Interviewed by Lloyd Borstelmann
At Stanford University
September 15, 1992

Borstelmann: This interview with Eleanor Maccoby by Lloyd Borstelmann is recorded at Stanford University on September 15, 1992. It should be considered as a supplement to her chapter in the 8th volume of the *History of Psychology and Autobiography 1989*, edited by Gardner Lyndsey. Where to start? I guess I should start by saying if there's any—well, it's hard for you to say, I guess, whether there's anything that you might wish you had included and hadn't?

Maccoby: Well, when I'm asked questions by students these days about what it's like to have a long career in psychology, one of the things that they almost always ask about is what it means in particular to be a woman having had a career in psychology, and I don't think I emphasized that very much in the chapter. The reason is that I didn't feel as though my career had very much to do with my sex. And I understand it's true that a lot of people who are members of what you might call disadvantaged groups, in some sense, don't feel that they personally have ever been discriminated against. In my own case I felt, indeed, that such a thing was very rare. I felt and still feel that the important thing about having a career in psychology is first of all to decide whether you're a scientist. And how do you decide that? I think you have to be an intellectual. Now I'm talking about a career as a research psychologist and not one that's a therapist, which I think takes quite different skills. But if you're going to be an academic person who does research and teaching, you have to be an intellectual. Not everyone is and not everyone values it even. So you have to be a pretty intense and committed reader, I think, for one thing as well as a consumer of research, other people's research. You have to care about how experiments come out and let yourself be guided by their results.

Borstelmann: And enjoy playing with data.

Maccoby: Yes.

Borstelmann: Other people's data as well as your own.

Maccoby: Sure. Be an empiricist, in that sense, as well as a theoretician. I mean, you have to ask yourself the big questions and keep on looking for the data that would be relevant. But I think just regarding all your ideas as hypothesis until you've had a chance to get some data that are relevant is important. And change your mind if necessary; that may be one of the hardest things, but one of the most important things, if you really are going to be a scientist. And I think those kinds of questions are absolutely gender-free; there's no reason why either sex should have an advantage in having that kind of thought processes, it seems to me.

Borstelmann: Two things, one about the business of, as a woman it is the case, is it not, that there is a long history of women in child development?

Maccoby: Absolutely. Very great women, so that you could say that's an example of sexism—that child development was thought to be more of a women's field than the other sub-fields of psychology. And maybe—but I don't feel that I got into it by virtue of being a woman because the two things that were relevant to my being hired by Bob Sears, which is when I became a developmental psychologist essentially, was that I had experience in survey research and that I had training in learning theory. And I should say that most of the people in the country at that time who had that combination, and there weren't many, were men. So if it had happened that a man with that combination had arrived at Harvard at that time, he could have just as easily hired him.

Borstelmann: So it was really the involvement with Sears in the Patterns study that really got you involved in child development?

Maccoby: Well, the Patterns study plus the fact that Sears left Harvard in 1953 to come to Stanford, and I took over his course.

Borstelmann: Yes. It was the combination of the two.

Maccoby: Yes. And so I began—you know when you teach, you really then study and organize the material. That was the first time I'd ever read Piaget. I began to be very interested in the cognitive side of development, which of course was not something Bob Sears was interested in. So it sort of took on a life of its own, my interest in development psychology.

Borstelmann: Right. So you've had a continuing involvement in studies of socialization, but you've also been interested in the development of attention. Now I want to ask you about the thing that probably has come on since you did that chapter for the history book, which is your current or most recent work on studies of children of divorce, in terms of their custody. So could we talk a little bit about that?

Maccoby: Sure.

Borstelmann: How you got into that and how it went?

Maccoby: Yes. Well, I got into it because Professor Michael Wald in the law school became very interested in family restructuring after divorce. He was interested in custody issues. So in the process of making himself informed about that area, he thought he needed to know some developmental psychology as well; he came and audited my undergraduate course in development.

Borstelmann: Good for him.

Maccoby: Then he asked me if I would co-teach a course with him, which was a seminar on custody. And I was to bring to bear in that meeting all the information I could lay my hands on regarding the study of family structure. At that time there was some very interesting stuff beginning to come out, the Hetherington work, the [Judith] Wallerstein work, etc., and we taught that seminar together for 14 years. The more we taught it--well, we originally started with a seminar that was called "Children and the Law," and we tried to cover children's rights with respect to schooling, delinquency, abuse, neglect, and foster care. I mean, you can imagine the whole list of topics there are in which the legal issues come up, and it was obvious that we couldn't do justice to any of those topics trying to put them all together into one ten-week-quarter. So we narrowed down and focused more and more on custody, and it turns out there was always plenty to be said about that. We had, I think, very interesting literature because we did assign our students some of the writings by developmental psychologists on divorce. But in addition, we had case studies from legal journals and, of course, when those things are written up they are almost always appeals cases. So they are highly contested, highly conflicted kinds of cases and very interesting ones. And so whenever one would think that there was something relevant to policy decisions from the developmental literature, you would have to test it out against these extreme cases. Now I've always thought that one disadvantage of the law is that it does respond to extreme cases. There's the very large body of uncontested cases out there, around which the law is generally not oriented because the law, as I say, is case law. And cases, at least in the law journals, are conflicted cases. So we began to mull over that a lot. But in our experience in that seminar, it became more and more evident how inadequate the existing social science data was in terms of its relevance to legal policy. At the end of each seminar, we would ask our students to write a model custody statute as their paper assignment. They did that in teams, and the teams would have some law students and some graduate students in it. They would argue with each other day and night, but they would bring up questions for which we had no answers. So this was the basic reason why I thought it would be useful to try to do some research that was more policy oriented. I'm not sure whether it's really possible to have social science data that's truly relevant to the legal process, partly because social science data gives you average trends, which for the most part are means of large samples or sub samples. The law deals with individual cases and has to be concerned about the exceptions as it is about the generalities. But, nevertheless, I think one can do something, and so I decided that it would be a good idea to embark on that. At the time that it became possible for me to do that, in terms of my other commitments, Michael Wald wasn't available. Now J. Merrill Carlsmith, who at that time was directing the Center for Family Studies, sort of put me together with Robert Mnookin who is also a Professor of Law that was very interested in the dispute resolution processes and who wanted to see how that worked out in the family dispute arena. So we began to talk with one another and recognized that we did have joint interests and made an application for money and got it. So we embarked on a longitudinal study of parents where we interviewed--oh, we had to make a difficult decision. Many studies have very small samples if they are in the psychological literature on divorce and family structure. A wonderful example is Santog and Warshak; I don't know if you know that work?

Borstelmann: No.

Maccoby: Well, they have a study on comparing father custody families with mother custody families, and they came out with the conclusion that children are better off if they are in the custody of their same-sex parent. I think they had eight girls in father custody and nine boys, you know, tiny samples, which is just exactly what was par for the course in psychological literature at that time. Mavis Hetherington had somewhat larger samples, but not a lot. We decided that we really needed to have large samples if we were going to compare kids according to their age, sex, and different custodial arrangements. The larger the sample the less intensive your data collection can be, so we made the decision to get a fairly large sample. It wasn't large by the standards of sociologists who use national data banks like Furstenburg so that we fell in the middle. We took 1,100 families and studied them over a considerable period, but we did it by telephone interviewing; we did not bring the families in for observation of their interaction and that kind of thing. So you can see there's a tradeoff there.

Borstelmann: Sure.

Maccoby: And I think that the study has paid off quite nicely. Our first book, which is called *Dividing the Child*, is going to be out near the end of October or early November via Harvard Press and that's jointly with Mnookin. Now we did a second study, which was fairly independent of the first one, with a different team. Christy Buchanan is the Study Director on the second study, and Sandy Dornbusch and I are the other two principals. The three of us have followed-up the adolescent kids of the divorcing families from the first study to see how they were doing, and there we did more in the way of assessment of the adjustment of the individual kid.

Borstelmann: Yes right. So that's also in publication?

Maccoby: We are in the process of writing that book now; we've got rough drafts of most of the chapters.

Borstelmann: Could you indicate briefly some of the highlights of some of these studies, or is that possible?

Maccoby: Oh, the database is massive, as you can imagine. We call it the longitudinal snowball because--

Borstelmann: Maybe I should ask what your reaction to the outcomes of the studies is.

Maccoby: Well, profoundly one has to be impressed with the differential parental roles of mothers and fathers after divorce as well as before. A good deal of the reform efforts in divorce statutes has been to try to make mothers and fathers stand equal before the law and presumably have an equal shot at custody, but it doesn't work that way. In fact, when parents make their own informal low-conflict agreements about who is going to have major responsibility for the children, they usually choose the mother. The more they go into the legal system the higher the percentage of father wins, so to speak, even though it still usually ends up with the mother. So I don't think that the large preponderance of maternal custody reflects bias in the legal system at all. It's just that, in fact, the two sexes don't stand equal when it comes to parenting. And I don't quite want to put it in terms of parent rights, although some people do put it in those terms. The rights of parents, I have begun to feel, shouldn't be the paramount consideration when people are discussing these issues at all, but the well-being of children should prevail.

Borstelmann: This is the focus of divorce mediation.

Maccoby: Yes, absolutely. Our laws have mostly been reframed to take out any presumption for mothers or for fathers and to say that each case should be decided individually according to the best interest of the children. The more you study that the more you realize how impossible it is. That is, courts don't have a decent way of finding out what the best interest of children is.

Borstelmann: Exactly.

Maccoby: Furthermore, they can't see into the future. One of the things that we have found is that families don't stand still and surprisingly to us, we found that about half of the kids were living either with their dads or in joint custody three and half years after the parents split. About half of them hadn't been there all along as they'd moved from one household to another; there's a lot of moving. And in view of that, a lot of issues of legal principle arise because we worry about whether fathers, for instance, are in compliance with the amount they're asked to pay. Do we ask if the parents are in compliance with what their divorce decree said they were supposed to do about where the children were going to live? No, we don't ask that because we know that the law can't possibly monitor families individually over a long period of time. We can also see that many of these decisions to shift the residence of kids are sensible family decisions. Somebody moves, remarries, or goes a long distance away and can't maintain joint custody any longer. So informal decisions of that kind and re-decisions

are sort of the order of the day. It is true that some parents behave coercively; we got a few cases of kidnapping.

Borstelmann: Oh boy.

Maccoby: We got coercion. One of our mothers said, "He told me if I tried to take the children, he would kill me." And she said, "I believed it because he had beaten me so badly." So the father in that family had the children. You have cases of undermining by parents of each other, where the children learn to play off the parents; there's plenty of that. The bright side of the picture is that it seems to us that the kids are doing quite well in cases where the parents can cooperate. Kids like to have both parents continue to be involved in their lives for the most part (unless one of the parents is totally deviant), and that can only be done, in any way that's supportive for the children, if the parents are willing to do business together. They don't have to like each other, but they have to not undermine, not bad mouth, and not sabotage visitation with the other parent.

Now, can parents be taught to do that? Probably in some cases their performance together could be greatly improved by counseling. In other cases, I'm sure it can't; they are just too angry and let's face it, whole rafts of married people aren't very good at negotiation and dispute resolution. You know, they stomp out of the room and refuse to talk; they blow up and make the other person angry intentionally and so on; they express and feel enormous contempt for the other person, so that no matter what the other person says they can find something wrong with it. So to my mind, the tough issue is how much should children be exposed to that for the sake of keeping up their relationship with both parents. I mean, parents have a right in the law, non-residential parents, to visitation. So far in the law, we won't cut it off unless there's proven child abuse or a total parental incapacity, but there are all kinds of lesser degrees of those things that children are being exposed to. I worry about that, and I don't know how the law could be re-formulated in order to make children's lives more comfortable.

Borstelmann: Yes right. I know you have had some interest in child development and public policy. Now what are the implications of all this for public policy about divorce and custody other than you've been saying?

Maccoby: Well, one obvious implication is that divorce is hard on kids; it's hard on everybody. We wish it wasn't happening so much. Now if you can tell me why it's happening so much or how to reduce the rate of it, then I would be very interested in hearing. I haven't yet heard very good analysis of what we could do about that from the stand point of public policy. I think that in the history of human kind there have been lots of women who have put up with rotten marriages because they had no alternative. Now that they are more able to earn their own living, and there isn't as much stigma attached to being a single mother, women are trying to make it on their own. It's really interesting that in our sample, and several others, women were most likely to be the first one who wanted out of the marriage than the men, two to one. And both parents agree that this is true that the women were more often the one to leave.

Borstelmann: The initiating one, is that what you are saying about the separation or divorce?

Maccoby: Yes, the separation; they're the ones who want out more often. And when you consider that concept--

Borstelmann: Which is sort of contradictive to one stereotype that some--well, maybe quite a number of women have that--

Maccoby: Men are leaving?

Borstelmann: Yes, right.

Maccoby: Leaving them in the lurch.

Borstelmann: Well, I don't mean that the particular one, but that women in general see that process.

Maccoby: Yes, I know they do. And why is it? It's really amazing when you think that they must know the terrible financial beating they're going to take. It really is true that they fall into—well, many women fall into true poverty. But for the most part, even several years after the divorce, our women are only about 60% as well off as they were before, until they remarry. Now maybe most of them think they will remarry, but remarriage rates are going down. I think men are less willing these days to take on someone else's kids.

Borstelmann: Particularly if they've been divorced; this is very tough on the kids.

Maccoby: It is an element of family deterioration. If we start to describe what's happening to families, that certainly is one. Now, one thing we do find is that after divorce the majority of our fathers stay involved. We don't have as fast rates of father drop-out as other people reported at earlier periods. Whether that's just because California's law has really been revised to try to sustain the involvement of fathers, I don't know.

Borstelmann: I think it's more general.

Maccoby: Do you?

Borstelmann: That's my impression, yes. Please offer some indication about your study of the follow-up study with the adolescents?

Maccoby: Well, the groups that are doing best on the average were the ones in dual residence.

Borstelmann: Who were in dual residence?

Maccoby: Yes, to our surprise. Now they were also very variable. When their parents were in high conflict, they were the worst-off; when their parents were cooperating, they were the best-off of all the kids. The cooperation of parents enabled their children to sustain good strong relationships with both parents.

Borstelmann: In the sample, are they adolescents at the time of the divorce and custody decision?

Maccoby: No. We saw them four and a half years after their parents split.

Borstelmann: OK, yes.

Maccoby: And at the time of the initiation of the parent study, let's see, we interviewed them at age ten and a half to 18. We started interviewing their parents four years before that, so they were six or so--ages six to 14 at the time their parents split. So in other words, our follow-up study doesn't tell us anything about the kids who were under six at the time their parents split, and most of our kids were under six because the median length of marriage for our families was seven years; so there were lots of very little children. We were speaking of the differential roles of men and women as parents. We had a very small number of kids under the age of two that went into their father's custody, which was about ten of them, I think. Nine or ten of whom eight were living with fathers who were living with their mothers, and the maternal grandmother was taking care of the child. We conclude that you really just don't find men taking care of tiny children, the infants and toddlers.

Borstelmann: Well that's true of intact families and not surprising.

Maccoby: We have to come to grips with this basic fact in our understanding the functioning of the two sexes, it seems to me. The birth of children truly does differentiate their roles.

Borstelmann: Truly does?

Maccoby: It does truly differentiate the roles of men and women no matter how equalitarian you've made up your mind to be. Now that doesn't--I don't mean to detract from the importance of fathers doing their share, but I think that it would behoove all of us who are feminists to think that we can have good relations between men and women without their functioning being exactly the same in society.

Borstelmann: Yes, right.

Maccoby: Because I don't see how, if children are going to be born, that they will be the same.

Borstelmann: Yes, all of which simply points to more general societal problems, right?

Maccoby: Well, general societal facts; whether they need to be problems, I'm not sure.

Borstelmann: Yes, ok, yes better put. You've had other interests in--well now, I know in your more tender years, and somewhat later, you were very much a political activist. So I'm wondering how much interest you've had on a continuing, or at different times, basis of the relation of child development research to social public policy.

Maccoby: Well, I am not any longer--

Borstelmann: I know it's a controversial issue, when into SRCD.

Maccoby: I have felt that we should be trying to find the policy relevance of our research. And at the same time, I think we have to be very wary of political correctness that we have to be willing to open up our minds and our data and our inquiries to all possibilities. But I see many lines of convergence between other policy and child development research, and I have been active in a different sort of way than I was in my youth. I don't march in picket lines and chalk the pavements anymore, but I served on the panel on child care policy for the National Research Council and was, for six years, on their central committee on child development research and public policy. I am a member of the Carnegie Council on Adolescence, and that council has taken up issues like middle schools. Is it a good idea to segregate kids between the ages of seventh grade to ninth grade in separate schools? Or has that been a failure, and should there be a different way to handle education for kids at that age? They put out a very interesting report on that subject.

Borstelmann: That's interesting; I thought that was a crazy separation.

Maccoby: Yes, it hasn't turned out well.

Borstelmann: Just in terms of psychological development.

Maccoby: But there are remedies; our remedies are limited partly, believe it or not, by the existence of buildings.

Borstelmann: Yes, I know.

Maccoby: There are junior high schools that have been built everywhere, and they're too big and too impersonal for kids of the age that they are dealing with.

Borstelmann: At the same time, buildings need to be used.

Maccoby: Well anyway, the Carnegie Council on Adolescence has taken up a series of issues of that kind. Now there's another Carnegie enterprise on the first three years of life and children's benefits and welfare for that age. I'm a member of that, and we're starting to talk about welfare policy, for example, as many other groups have done. I think I said in my autobiography that I've tried to do those things, but at the same time I have felt frustrated because you can spend many important days of your life in these kinds of enterprises. You can write a wonderful report, and it goes nowhere; it gets shelved. And how you can feed careful analysis of public issues into true political problem-solving? Solution is something I don't think our country has come to very good grips with, and I see it in the current political situation.

Borstelmann: Yes, right. OK. I note in your Vita that one of your current publications in press is kind of the history of parents' socialization of children. Do you want to comment a little on this? What's your finding, or what is your perspective?

Maccoby: Well, my perspective is one that affects a kind of intellectual re-orientation. I think about the time that I got my graduate training and even my undergraduate training when I was a student of Guthrie's way back in those days. Guthrie, unbeknownst to many current people, was one of the leading learning theorists of the time, but, of course, Hullian and Skinnerian theories dominated the field for a long time. But this was SR psychology, and it got taken up in the cognitive revolution like so many others did. My only personal research contribution I would say to that was the work on selective attention. I became interested in that because SR psychology doesn't spend much time trying to define what a stimulus is, but as soon as you discovered that the stimulus truly isn't defined by the energy that strikes the sense organs and that there are selective processes that determine which things get into the information processing system, it changes your orientation quite considerably. The doer, the learner becomes much more active in selecting from the elements that's available out there, just as Piaget said. So that's why I got into work on selective perception, and I loved it. But I soon discovered that you need a tremendous amount of technology to study perception; it's a tough field.

Borstelmann: OK. But what about the--?

Maccoby: Going back to socialization?

Borstelmann: Yes, right.

Maccoby: OK. Well, I'm saying that about the cognitive revolution because I think that it affects one's view of socialization too. From the stand point of standard SR theory, it really doesn't matter very much what age a child is, or what its intellectual capacity is, or what kinds of interpretations it's going to make of the stimulus material it's offered. Now, of course, Piaget had an entirely different view about that and I wanted to try to--first of all, I wanted to try to meld together ideas about what parents were doing with what children were ready to receive, so to speak, because I saw that as what the socialization process is about; and it had to be very different for an infant or a toddler than it would be for an eight or ten-year-old. I still don't feel that the field of socialization and research has thought seriously enough about age transitions. There's been a lot of description of age transitions in the way children behave and think, but not in the way parents behave and think with respect to those children. There's a little bit as Baldwin did some of it; he was the first one, Alfred Baldwin, to put up tables showing changes in parental treatment of children according to the child's age. And the most recent book of Judy Dunn with Plomin on--what's it called, "*Different Lives*"? It's on siblings. She did a longitudinal study looking at parents dealing with a two-year-old and then three years later dealing with that same child at five and a new two-year-old. What she found was that parents were quite consistent in the way they deal with a two-year-old, but that the socialization is very strongly driven by the age of the child. This is not surprising, but why haven't we been more conscious of it?

Borstelmann: Well have we been driven too much by our theoretical perspectives and not looked at the phenomena closely enough.

Maccoby: Well, maybe except that our theoretical perspectives should be developmental; they are developmental on the cognitive side of things. Somehow they haven't been sufficiently so on the socialization side. And I also think that one of the biggest phenomena that has happened in socialization research is the demise of reinforcement theory, but we haven't truly conceptualized very well, I think, what we want to put in its place. I had a long argument with Gerry Patterson recently when I was visiting him because he is writing a paper that continues to defend reinforcement theory as the central process in development and in socialization. I think there are certain things that just can't be well-described in that language. Let me give you an example of something I saw recently in a relative's family. I was going over to pick-up my two grand-nieces after school to bring them over to my house for a swim. The youngest one is seven, and the oldest one is 12. I was to pick-up the seven-year-old at her house, and she was to guide me to her sister's school to pick her up after an athletic event. Her mother said, "You know how to show Aunt Eleanor the way to your sister's school?" The little girl said, "I'm not sure," and the mother said, "Oh, I know you know, you've driven over there with me a lot of times." And that was the end of it as far as I was concerned. But what that mother did that night was to get the younger child into the car with her and have her practice so that if she came to a corner of the road where she wasn't sure, they would rehearse. She'd say, "Now Alice, tell me which way am I supposed to turn." So when I picked-up that little girl the next day she was so competent, and she said, "Now get into the left lane up here because you're going to turn left when we come to the next corner." It was remarkable because her mother had given her the skill with which to-- the little sub-skill, the little sub-routine, a little package of competence that she'll be able to plug-in, and I'm sure she'll be able to use some of it again in encounters where she needs to direct somebody. You can multiply that by 1000 in terms of the way parents can teach the little component competencies that give a child the self-confidence to progress from one thing to another. Now we have a name for this kind of thing; it's called scaffolding, and the Vygotskians have been big on it. They have been thinking almost entirely in terms of the impact of this on problem-solving by an individual; they hardly talked at all about scaffolding and interpersonal relationships. And then you think socialization is mainly teaching social behavior, not teaching how to add two and two and get four; there's a whole big arena out there. How we help kids is by being the more competent partner with them. Now can you put all that into reinforcement language?

Borstelmann: No way.

Maccoby: I don't think so; it doesn't make sense.

Borstelmann: There's a kind of, you know--well, there is reinforcement value to it, but that's not the central factor. The central factor is this kind of--

Maccoby: Well, if you want to say that it's reinforcing to have a child feel confident.

Borstelmann: Yes, what does that say though?

Maccoby: It's almost empty, that statement.

Borstelmann: Exactly so, but what's fascinating, of course, is the whole reciprocal interaction between parent and child and the teacher and child.

Maccoby: Well this, of course, is one of the other big things that has happened in socialization studies: we no longer think top down in the same way that we did under the old SR regime. We really were thinking of the child as the animal in the maze or the pigeon pecking the key, and with certain reinforcement schedules they would learn to do some little bit of behavior or other. This is so totally different when you think about interaction. Now I grant you, reciprocal behaviors is a two-way street where each person is continuously influencing the other, and I've no doubt that parent behavior is much influenced by what their child has just done.

Borstelmann: Sure.

Maccoby: If you think of it that way, you do encounter a lot of difficulties in trying to say who is doing what to whom and who is influential. You can end up with the kind of dilemmas that the geneticists are really trying hard to impose upon us, namely that--well, how do you really know that any of the things that happens to a child, or anything about the way they turn out, has anything to do with parenting? The parents are just people who respond to what the child is going to do anyway, so to speak. Now, I think that position is nonsense and they will hem and haw and say, "Oh, that's not what we really mean," but in fact, you can find quotes that say, "Yes, that is what we really mean; it's all genetic." And I think that's an absurdity. In fact, people influence each other intensively; parents influence children intensively. There is no way they could not because, in fact, they have enormously greater power. They're bigger and stronger and smarter and more experienced, and they can control a child's environment.

Borstelmann: What, in part, it sounds you're arguing for, well you are, is for a need for different perspectives than we've been working with for a long time.

Maccoby: Well, yes, I guess. You certainly see these newer perspectives emerging that have been around for quite a long while now in attachment theory.

Borstelmann: Yes, right.

Maccoby: And I think it's beginning to cohere into a larger sense of what socialization is like.

Borstelmann: So then the question is who's going to bring these perspectives to new generations of graduate students or undergraduates?

Maccoby: Well, the new generation of graduate students should certainly be putting it together themselves and writing their own books; that's what I'm hoping will happen.

Borstelmann: Ok, fair enough, alright. What's our time?

Maccoby: Well, it's ten minutes of two, so we've got another ten or 15 minutes.

Borstelmann: OK, that's fine. You have certainly, along the way, garnered your share of awards.

Maccoby: Oh, yes. Yes, my husband used to tease me about going a year without any ego boosts!

Borstelmann: Yes, you know the G. Stanley Hall, the SRCD Distinguished Scientist, the APA Distinguished Scientist, and the Distinguished Publication Award for Women in Psychology and my, my, you know?

Maccoby: AERA was probably the one that surprised me the most because I don't think of myself as being very relevant to educational pursuit.

Borstelmann: Yes, how about that. And you've been quite active in SRCD affairs.

Maccoby: Yes.

Borstelmann: And in national policy and funding of research.

Maccoby: Yes. Those are, in a sense, the obligations of being a professional person, aren't they?

Borstelmann: Yes, indeed.

Maccoby: We have to keep our organizations running, and I have absolutely loved SRCD. It's getting too big now.

Borstelmann: Yes, indeed.

Maccoby: It's still not anywhere nearly as big as APA and I like its inter-disciplinary character and its international character. I had some disagreements with some of my colleagues here who don't think that the inter-disciplinary side is very important. I do, and I think we ought to keep that going even though I know it's difficult. It's not easy either because the standards of research design and data analysis, and what not, are really not the same when you compare pediatrics with developmental psychology.

Borstelmann: That's a basic problem in any inter-disciplinary work, isn't it? And you've engaged in a bit of that over your own career.

Maccoby: I like inter-disciplinary work; partly that came out of my history in the department of Social Relations at Harvard. It's interesting to me when I look at the centers of interdisciplinary work around the country that a lot of them have people that came out of the department of Social Relations. And as that cadre of people has gone through the pipe line and through the system and are now retiring, I'm not sure they are being replaced anywhere.

Borstelmann: I've wondered about that, I've wondered the same thing. It was a noble venture.

Maccoby: A noble experiment that didn't succeed, except in its product, which isn't too shabby when you stop and think about it.

Borstelmann: That's right, yes.

Maccoby: I think the disciplinary centripetal force is so strong in the academic world; you can't somehow get departments to make appointments that support inter-disciplinary enterprises. I've seen its connection with my husband's work in disease prevention where it was just fortuitous that it was possible to find somebody in the School of Humanities and Sciences that wanted to work with medical people on these issues.

Borstelmann: And he loved it, right?

Maccoby: Yes, and I guess medical psychology or disease prevention psychology has become enough of a field nationally so that some new people are being trained in it.

Those who inspired and were influenced by Eleanor Maccoby:

Mentors

Edwin Ray Guthrie

Colleagues

Robert Sears

Michael Wald (Stanford Law School)

Robert Mnookin

J. Merrill Carlsmith

Christy Buchanan

Sanford Dornbusch

Gerald Patterson

Georg von Békésy