Lila Ghent Braine

- Born January 11, 1926 in Montreal, Quebec, Canada; died January 19, 2015
- B.A. (1947), M.A. (1949), and Ph.D. (1951) all in psychology from McGill University

Major Employment

- Professor of Psychology, Barnard College: 1974-1998
- Research Scientist and Associate Research Professor, George Washington University: 1960-1968
- Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Downstate Medical Center, State University of New York: 1955-1960

Major Areas of Work

- Physiological psychology, perception, cognition

SRCD Affiliation

- *Child Development* Editorial Board (1984-1989)

SRCD ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Lila Ghent Braine

Interviewed by Faith Lamb Parker
In Lila G. Braine's Home
September 8, 2004

Parker: This is the SRCD Oral History interview with Lila Braine, interviewed by Faith Lamb Parker at her home on September 8th, 2004. Describe your family background along with any—

Braine: I was born in Montreal, Province of Quebec in Canada, and I was brought up there, I went to school there, and I went McGill University. So I have—all that period I was in Montreal. Actually, my parents were immigrants from Eastern Europe, both from Romania, Jews who left at the time of Pogroms in the early part of the century, although they didn't come together. My mother came as a ten year old with her family whereas my father came on his own as a—well, I don't know, I think he was 16 or something like that. He and a group of young Jewish men, they were known for walking across Europe. They didn't quite do that, but they did walk from Romania from one Jewish community to another to Germany, where some wealthy German Jews bought them passage to the United States. So neither of my parents went to high school, although they were obviously smart people, and my mother actually had done—I mean, in Canada had done well in school and was hoping to go to high school, but her family needed her at home. And my father, you know, came and worked. I mean, that was—being sort of the only option. He eventually came to Canada because some brothers of his came over and they had a shop in which they sold clothes and a variety of things. And well—let's see—my mother worked in a clothing factory where she rose actually and sort of became a designer in the factory. Well, I was surprised when she told me that, because I think that today you would have to have had much more professional training to do that kind of thing. Anyway, you know, being a child of immigrants and being in a city where there was, at that time—I'm not saying there is now, but at that time there was really a lot of anti-Semitism, so you know, I—my family, you know, we always had this feeling that you have to be careful, you know, you didn't want to do anything that was going to make anybody angry at you, or look down on you, or draw attention, right? So, you know, that was something that I realize in retrospect was very salient to me as a child. And what else? Well, you know, I went to school. I have two brothers. I really loved school and I guess when I was in high school in the summers I worked. A relative found me a job in an office and that—I hated it. I thought I don't want to spend the rest of my life this way. So—

Parker: What did you experience in school, what was their—did you experience anti-Semitism with the kids or with the teachers or how about your school experience?

Braine: Right. My school—you know, sort of—my elementary and high school?

Parker: Yeah.

Braine: That was okay. I lived in an area—I went to a school where there was—you know, I would have said that about a quarter of the kids in my class were Jewish, so there was a group. Anti-Semitism came more from other kids, not from the teachers. I've never felt that actually from the teachers.

Parker: And was this high school the kind of high school where anyone went to college or was it more of a—

Braine: Well, no, it wasn't—not everyone went to college, but maybe half of the people went to college. It was considered a good high school so that was good.

Parker: You said something—your early work experience in the office and you decided to become—

Braine: Oh yes. Right, right.

Parker: What was your next work experience?

Braine: Oh, well actually, when I went to college, actually, I became—I worked in a florist's shop, actually. I liked that better. Well, it was—

Parker: Relating with the people?

Braine: —yes, relating to people, but also it was sort of fun. I mean, I discovered it was fun making funeral wreaths. That was one of the more interesting things that you could do in a florist's shop, actually. So, you know, some of that was fun. It brought out a different side of me whereas the office work, I mean, what could I do? I mostly did filing. It's just incredibly boring and that was really the main thing.

Parker: Well what—

Braine: Let me just say one thing I guess—

Parker: —yeah, sure.

Braine: —that is, you know, I think that—oh, I don't know, whatever—as a result of my early experiences, even when I was in high school I became—I was really interested in social justice issues and did some political work for something that was called the CCF, the Canadian Cooperative Federation. It doesn't exist anymore. But anyway, you know, it was one of those groups that attracted young people into—so it was something I actually didn't tell my parents about, because I think they would have felt nervous about that. But it's been a continuing interest I guess is what I really want to say.

Parker: I guess we have to cover each one of these. I don't know if you'll have the same one—

Braine: Yes, I hope so. Early adult experience, yeah, right.

Parker: Yeah, yeah, okay. So we'll do that for the transcriber—

Braine: Okay.

Parker: —so they know sort of—

Braine: Where we are, right, right.

Parker: Number two, what early adult experiences were important to your intellectual development, collegiate experiences?

Braine: Well actually, I loved going to college, and I loved even more going to graduate school.

Parker: Where did you go to graduate school?

Braine: Oh, I went to McGill.

Parker: Both?

Braine: Yes, that's right. Well, it was, you know, it was extremely liberating for me. And it was also liberating as a woman, because I discovered that my intellect was valued—was considered valuable, I mean by men as well as by teachers. You know? And you know—and there were so many opportunities for independence, and that was particularly true at—in the psychology department in graduate school. I worked with somebody called Donald Hebb. So you probably know the name. Do you know the name?

Parker: Yeah.

Braine: Well, that's wonderful! That's wonderful. Anyway, he was a terrific person, but he also believed in giving people, giving students lots of freedom and he would say, "Well, why don't you go work on da, da, da?" But he never said what you should do, and if you wanted to go and discuss it with him that was fine, but he really gave you opportunities. And there was a wonderful group of other students around at the time, so that whole period, undergraduate, but particularly graduate school was just one that I look back on with the greatest sort of—I don't know—feelings of warmth and excitement. I mean, I'm sure there must have been something wrong with it too, but in retrospect I can't remember. It was really a good experience. And I got my Ph.D. and, actually, along the way I got married. It was a sort of early marriage and eventually ended in divorce, but, you know, it was good while it lasted. And I married somebody who was a medical student and well, you know, we shared a lot of interests. No, no, that's right, no, no. We were—at that time had certainly no intention of having any children. I did get married again later and I had two children and so on and so forth.

Parker: Can you trace the origins of your interest in child development?

Braine: Well, you see, my interest in child development really came about in a very odd way, because I was a student in physiological psychology. I was really interested in the relation between brain and behavior. I wasn't really interested in developmental psychology except in the sense that I have always had a sort of developmental perspective. So really my main—I really got into developmental through research, but teaching helped. And I'll tell you about that. The thing is when I did my master's—I did my master's on a problem on the development of hunger, and this is in rats. And I actually, quite spontaneously, just did a developmental study. That is, I studied rats at different ages, so you know—and when, after my Ph.D., I came to New York and I worked in the lab of Hans Lucas Teuber. I don't know if that name means anything—anyway, he was a very well known neuropsychologist, and we were studying the effects of brain injury. It was where people who had been injured during the Second World War or during the Korean War, studying the effects on perception and cognition, and particularly on tactile perception and visual perception. So one of the

things we found that just in normal controls there was a difference in sensitivity, you know, sensitivity to pressure on the two hands and things like that. And so I went and thought I would find out when this developed. So I went and did a study with children, and then I got interested in some sort of visual spatial deficits that brain injured people sometimes show, and I thought, Well, you know, children, it takes a while for them to develop spatial concepts, so I'll find out how spatial concepts develop in children and will it give me a handle on understanding how it breaks up in adults. Well, I thought, you know, and I think that's—I still think that's a reasonable position by the way.

Parker: Well of course, sure.

Braine: So—but of course, I thought at the time that I would study children. It would take me about two years and I'd figure this out, and you know—well, anyway—

Parker: And you were wrong?

Braine: —I was very wrong. And so I in a sense got, you know, deeper and deeper into it. But that's in a way the trajectory of how I, you know—I suppose you would say how I got into developmental, although I feel in retrospect that my approach was sort of in an underlying way always developmental, which is kind of interesting. And I hadn't really thought about that until I, you know, thought about this really. So okay, so that's the research part and that's the really—the main way in which I got into developmental. But there's another little twist to it. When I came to New York I was working in, you know—with Teuber's group. I also thought, Well, you know, I'd like a little teaching experience, and so everybody used to go to City College and, you know, they had all of these various sections for each course, and I went and the person who was head of the department at the time—see, I wanted to teach one of the sections in physiological psychology and he said, "No," but would I teach a section of developmental psychology? And I said, "Well no," because I hadn't taken a course, a graduate course. I had only taken one undergraduate course in developmental, so I really didn't know. And he said, "Oh. Well, that's all right. You'll learn." And I said, "No, no. I'll teach intro," you know, I didn't feel comfortable. But as I got into doing developmental work I thought, Well, you know, this is a way of learning. So, I don't know, a year or two later—I can't remember—I said, "Well, you know, if you still have a section in developmental I'll do it." But, you know, that was really just very sexist behavior on the part of this man. I mean, here he thought I could teach developmental psychology because I was a woman, because when I had said, "Oh, I don't," you know, "I haven't taken a graduate course," and he said, "Oh, that's all right." You know, "You could pick it up." I mean, anyway, so—

Parker: You have to know babies.

Braine: —that's right, that's right. So—and they grow, right. So is a kind of, you know, sexism helped push me into—because that was an area where it was easier for women to, you know, to get positions or to do things. It's really disgusting. But anyway, it wasn't, it wasn't so bad. I mean, I ended up enjoying teaching developmental, so it wasn't really a problem. So let me see—oh, significant colleagues? Well, I don't know. Jackie Goodnow is both a very long-term personal friend and also a colleague I guess. We met in Washington, D.C., and we sort of shared an office. We had young children at the same time and so there was really a great community of spirit both sort of on the personal level and academically and professionally. Right? Right. And I guess in Washington, I mean, there was Richard Walk. Do you know his name? Anyway, and Herb and Anne Pick out in Minneapolis have been—and of course the Gibsons. I was never friends with Jackie Gibson, but I certainly admired her and, you know, loved to talk to her at meetings and so on. It was, you know—we didn't always agree, but I really thought she was wonderful. So—and I'd always, you know, I had one foot in developmental and one foot—I didn't really have—at some point I didn't really have a foot in physiological, but a lot of my old friends were physiological, were people who were students at the same time that I was. So—

Parker: And they went in that direction?

Braine: —and they went in that direction, right.

Parker: I think we've covered a few of the other pieces, but let's say number four, what political and social events have enhanced your research, writing, and teaching?

Braine: Right. Well, you know, I think feminism and the women's movement certainly influenced me in my teaching. I can't honestly say that it's influenced my research, you know, I'm not really interested in gender differences, although I always look at them. The reason I—it's almost another principle. I somehow—I don't like this business of finding sort of differences, because those are multiply determined, shall we say. And I feel that if you understand the phenomenon that you're interested in then you understand why there are, you know, gender differences if there are. So it really was about—the women's movement certainly influenced my teaching; it influenced how I taught developmental psychology, how I taught, you know, gender, the issues that the text didn't bring up. But I also taught psychology and women; I taught probably one of the early courses. I taught a course in 1970, I guess.

Parker: Oh, it was right in the thick of it.

Braine: That's right. I'm trying to think. At that time I was in Santa Barbara and I was part of a group that worked to establish a daycare center, and we were, in fact, successful. This was a very big issue. That was a major achieve—I mean, I actually—I was one of the, you know, people who helped write the proposal, two of us who wrote the proposal to the administration and so on. We got the space, we—so it was something that was very important in my life. And I'm—even though my children were too old at that point to use it, but I understood what it meant to have young children and not to have adequate childcare. And of course, it influenced my administrative work, too, because when I went to Barnard I became very active in trying to—in working with a group of people to get a women's studies program established, and I chaired it for the first year, not that I really wanted to, but no other tenured woman was willing to do it. And I felt you need to have a tenured person in position if they're going to have any power at all. So yes, there were political events—I'm sure the civil rights movement influenced my teaching. I appreciated how, oh—it made me embarrassed sometimes about research since I realized how narrow our base was, our empirical database. So it influenced my thinking, but, in fact, it didn't influence the research problems that I looked at. And the only other thing—I might just make a little comment—you know, I had a job in a pediatrics department for a number of years and I think that came about not because of civil rights or the women's movement, but because the government was funding developmental research, behavioral research. And the head of the pediatrics department actually told me that why he was willing to hire somebody like me and some other people was because the major medical problems had been solved in pediatrics and that it was the behavioral problems that were really the issue. I thought that was very foresightful of him, and when I worked in pediatrics I didn't know any other psychologist who worked in pediatric departments, whereas now, you know, there's a whole section I think of psychologists who work in the pediatrics department. So you know, that's real—I mean, and that was a change, I think, a shifting that was happening in medicine and in government funding. So it's interesting.

Parker: We're starting up again. We took a little break there. And we've already covered number five under general intellectual history. And for personal research contributions we have covered one and two, so we're picking up with three. Please reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of your research and theoretical contributions, the impact of your work and its current status.

Braine: Oh well, that's a big question. (Laughter) Okay. Well, so I won't talk about my early work in physiological because I talked with you about the work in development and how I became interested in spatial perception. So when I first started, you know, there was a general belief that young children were insensitive to the orientation of pictures. You know, everybody's had the experience of seeing a two year old look at a picture upside down or a book and so on. So you know, and this was not only people's common experience, but it fitted with both Gestalt theory and learning theory, you know, so nobody actually bothered to ask whether this were the case. So I actually looked and found that young

children in fact are extremely sensitive to orientation. They have trouble recognizing pictures if they're not in the correct orientation, but the more interesting thing is that I found that preschool children consider some geometric shapes to be upside down in one orientation and right side up in another orientation. And it was not possible to account for this on the basis of, you know, their experience and so on, and I could define for simple figures the characteristics of the figure that made it right side up or upside down. And what my thinking about it, my sort of theoretical interpretation of it was that the judgment that something is right side up or looks right as some of the children said, that this is a judgment that the picture is easy to see, easy to recognize, easy to identify. And I tested that out by presenting pictures, you know, tachistoscopically either in what the children called right side up or upside down, and I found that they recognized more geometric shapes when they were in the right side up orientation. So you know, I, as a Hebb student, used his ideas, but—that people process shapes sequentially and I added the notion that you start at the phenomenal top and that you go in a vertical direction. There are a lot of reasons in the data for making these assumptions. So I think that there are a couple of strengths to this approach. One is it provides a basis, a theoretical basis, for connecting work on perception of orientation with perception of shape, so it could bring those two avenues of work together, I mean, in some—to some degree. And the other thing is that it suggests that there was some connection between children's judgments and people's aesthetic judgments in Western art. Well, this is actually a long story, but let me just say one little thing about that. Children, preschool children, actually prefer the sort of salient part of the picture to be in the upper part. They prefer a bigger margin, so to speak, on the bottom. If you look at the way in western art we mat pictures you will find that that's how they're matted. So that I think is an adult analogue, and you know, there are, you know, instances of abstract art that do elicit consistent judgments on the part of adults, what the upright orientation should be. Anyway, it's sort of a long story, which I obviously won't go into now, but I do think that's really interesting. And I think a second thing that I think is a strength is that I could describe three levels, so to speak, in children's development of the perception of orientation, and I was then able to do reaction time work with adults and show that you can still find these levels in adult performance. Now, that's an issue that has sort of always interested me and which you might say there's always a little bit of tension in my own work. That is, I really see myself as a developmental psychologist, but I really am interested in how you make the connection to adult perception. I mean, between the children's processes, so to speak, and adult processes. You know, if you think of two major theorists, sort of 20th century, I mean, there's Piaget, who said that old processes disappear and new ones take their place. But Freud, after all, said that you keep some vestiges. I'm not a Freudian, but I honestly think that that position is more correct. Well, maybe not correct for everything, but for some—I always say for some aspects of spatial perception you can show that there are some earlier processes that are still there. And you know, we keep some of our earlier reflexes and they only show up under special circumstances, but nevertheless, you know, they're there.

Parker: Well, do you see a connection between the processes as children develop and parallels with adults who have some trauma, physiological trauma?

Braine: Yes. Well, that's in a sense part of my point of view that if you understand the development of something you'll understand how it breaks up, you know, and if the adult isn't functioning—and you see some—actually, you know, a lot of the—there's a class of errors that brain injured people make. Well, brain injured people is a terrible phrase, I mean, because there are so many different, diverse kinds. But some errors that some brain injured people make can be traced to the children's judgments of what looks upright. That is, people tend to reproduce a shape in the orientation that looks upright. And then somebody, you know, the examiner says, "Oh, that's wrong, because that isn't how I showed it to you." But—so I think exactly that sort of thing does happen.

Parker: How about learning disabilities with children? Do you see, like, a parallel where as an adult you can kind of trace that they've had—

Braine: See, I don't actually know enough, and I think it would have to be—that my own particular work would only apply to learning disabilities where somebody had some spatial problems.

Parker: Right, right. That's what I meant.

Braine: Yes. Okay. Then I think it might apply, but I actually, you know, would need some data, so to speak.

Parker: Because as you were speaking I was thinking about certain pre-literacy skills and how that is what you're describing; stages are so important to the child actually becoming literate, because you have to have the *R* looking right. Otherwise it doesn't look like anything. But if you have a *P* not looking right—

Braine: Yeah, that's right. You have to—

Parker: So—

Braine: —understand—

Parker: —what looks right—

Braine: —right.

Parker: —yeah, about the letters—

Braine: Right.

Parker: Also, with little kids one of the—I think one of the predictors of school success and literacy is that by two they know which way the book goes, or even 18 months, or even a year, I think it goes back that—the research shows that children a really young age reverse the book—

Braine: Well, there are a lot of instances where they don't actually. I mean—and no doubt there are some instances where they do. But anyway, I have actually talked to teachers, and that's one of the things I've enjoyed doing, and they've often given me examples of things which we can then work out, you know, how they're related to some of these ideas. I mean, there's this very strong tendency on the part of children to verticalize shapes. I don't know, do you have a Bender-Gestalt test? One of the common errors that children make is to, you know, instead of drawing them horizontally they verticalize them and I think this is all part of this it looks better from their perspective when it's vertical. It's not that they don't understand—

Parker: —they just prefer it vertical

Braine: —they prefer it. And actually, because it's related to actually how you—I think how you process the shape. See, it's actually easier to draw in what is the perceptually upright position. Imagine if you, as an adult, had to draw an upside down face, you'd find it more difficult, or a sideways face, than if you could draw an upright face. So I think that it's that kind of thing that goes on with the children. So it's really fun. I mean, I could—you know, you shouldn't get me started, because I could spend a lot of time. So let me see, what kind of impact—that's one of the things. Well actually, you know, the original findings that children, preschool children had this preference for orientation, now that, you know, it did have an impact at first, because other people replicated it both in the States and in—I had a colleague actually who did this in Iran in Teheran, and somebody did in Japan, and Robert Serpell did in Zambia, actually. And they all found, you know, the same kinds of things, and so that was great. But the work has sort of fallen by the wayside, I left doing it in a sense because I reached a kind of impasse, you know? I mean, I could define for simple figures what made something upright or upside down, but once you really got to complex figures it—I could no longer make predictions. The figures would get too complex and there were too many variables. Also I liked to connect orientation judgments to shape perception, but theories of—and I—furthermore, shape

perception have been taken over by computer modeling. And I don't know enough about this to sort of work to make the connections, but I like to think that computer modeling might ultimately enable one to handle the complexity and work out uprightness. But you know, that's wishful thinking on my part, not anything I can, you know, say with any confidence. I'm sorry I can't do it myself, but it's a limitation. I think one other thought I had was, like, I've done a fair amount of work on the frame of reference that children use. That is, you know, if you're going to define something as at the top or the bottom or the left or the right, you really need a frame of reference. And the question always is, well, is it the body, is it the environment, is it, you know, something else? And there has been the view that children start off by using their body and then they gradually learn to use, you know, external cues, and actually, I have done—I have data really against that position. I've published against that position, but I don't think it had much effect—so I've argued sort of against that view, but I don't think that that work has had much impact. So just to sort of make that point sort of by the way.

Parker: And what is your—what did you find?

Braine: Well actually, I think that children initially really use external cues, because that is what space means to them, something out there. And I think that one of the difficulties—this is really sort of contrary to a lot of opinion—one of the difficulties children have with left and right is that they don't think of those terms as referring to the body. They think of those terms as referring to external space. If the term is used in a spatial sense, then I think children start off by thinking it's external. And it doesn't mean that young children, babies in particular—I think the way in which they do use body framework, but it's not really a body framework, is that they do have motor habits, so that if you're used to reaching for something here you will—I mean, if somebody puts you around the table you'll still use the same motion, and so it'll look as though you're using the body as the framework where it really is that you just are making the same motion. But it's a complicated matter. And the reason—well, let me—I just can't resist giving this sort of example—the reason I said what I did is that in doing some—I did some work here. I had children—one child was just so explicit, you know, a child would sit in front of me and I would say, "Show me your left hand," and, "Show me your right hand"—let's see, I'm just trying to think. Anyway, and the child would show it to me correctly, and then I would turn the child around and I would say, "Show me your left hand," and, "Show me your right hand," and one child said, "Well, now my left hand—it's—now it's on the right side." I mean, he had defined it in terms of the room, and—but it's that—it was such an explicit somehow explanation, but I think that what he was saying happens in a less articulated way for many children. But this is a whole other story. So we shouldn't—don't get me distracted, because it's—well, let me see. Theoretical weaknesses. Oh well, always theoretical weaknesses. I don't know. I did actually think that there are other ways than using this idea of processing the parts of a shape sequentially. There were other ways of thinking about it. Maybe that's a weakness, but I don't know. When I was thinking about it the only other thing I thought about was this isn't—I don't know whether it's a weakness or maybe it's a regret that my work has not been in the mainstream of developmental psychology. While this has been nice in some ways, it meant I didn't have to rush to get a paper out because somebody else was going to beat me to it, on the other hand it also meant that there were not a lot of people who were interested and who would serve as, you know, as people off whom one could bounce ideas and so on. But there are certain plusses and minuses, but I enjoyed what I did very, very much. So it's—it didn't really matter. But it—when I was thinking back in this way it did occur to me.

Parker: Five, please reflect on your experiences with the research funding apparatus over the years, comment on your participation in research funding.

Braine: Okay. Well, I served on the study section for the National Institute for Child Health and Development from 1972-'76 and on the small grants review committee of NIMH from 1983-'87. Now, the NICHD committee brought together, you know, physicians, psychologists, sociologists, biologists; it was a very wide ranging group, and there were some turf wars, so to speak, because everybody, you know, competed for money from the common pot. But on the other hand, I think everybody was trying to be fair, and you know, that was certainly very interesting, even though we didn't always appreciate somehow the significance of work from another area. And of course, we shaped policy by what we

funded, but you know, there was always another—you know, there was another committee. I've forgotten the name of it. I mean, we sent in our ratings, but it was really another committee that did the—made the final decision on the funding and that depended to some extent on the priorities that were set rather by the Institute as a whole. So we did some setting, but I really think that the final decisions were made by another committee and not by the academics. The small grants committee for NIMH, while most of us were psychologists, it was a smaller committee, we were funding young people who were, you know, looking for their first grant, and that was a very upbeat committee actually. We had a lot of fun together, but mostly I think it was—we also—we funded a lot of people and we felt good about being able to fund them. And I think many of us were sorry when we—when that committee was disbanded. I mean, it was after my time, but those of us who knew each other thought, well, too bad. You know? So in that case we helped some young people get started, but we really didn't have any power, so to speak, in—because, as I say, they've been disbanded, the group—maybe for good reasons. I don't really know. But I thought it was a nice idea to have a pot of money that we could use specifically for the first grant of young people who were starting out. It seemed to be a good idea, a good principle. But it isn't there a lot. So I had actually good luck in getting my own grants funded for which I was very grateful. I might just sort of say—this isn't the right place to say it, but you know, in the last—I started work on a totally new area in developmental, oh, in—I guess it was almost 1990. Anyway, I decided that—well, I was having some troubles and I had a mound of data on people's memory for orientation, and I think it was just that I found it turned out to be difficult to analyze in the ways that I had originally planned. And so I thought, well, you know, I wanted a fresh start, and so I began—and have done—did a little bit of work on children's understandings of conflicts with authorities. I mean, this is totally different, but I decided that there wasn't a lot of work on how children looked at authorities. But when they got into conflicts with their teachers or their parents or other adult authorities, you know, how did they see that situation being in so much less powerful a position, you know? How did they sort of think about it? So anyway, I did do—and the reason it comes up in this funding thing is that I say, well, you know, my work was in general funded by federal agencies but this last bit of work obviously wasn't. I had no track record, but I did get some funding from Barnard College and so I did manage to do some work. And it was really fun, really interesting.

Parker: Why don't we—I'm going to focus this section on your institutional contributions. Do you want to just list for us number one in which institutions have you worked, dates and capacities?

Braine: Sure. Capacities?

Parker: Yeah, why don't we get to that?

Braine: Okay, sure. So from 1951-'56—how are we doing?

Parker: I think we may be close to the end of this side.

Braine: Oh okay—

Parker: But it'll quit probably.

Braine: Okay. So 1951-'56 I was a research associate in the laboratory of Doctor Hans Lucas Teuber, and that was in the neurology department at the NYU Medical School. And from 1955-'60 I was an assistant professor of pediatrics in the pediatrics department at State University of New York Down State Medical Center. And from '60-'68 I was a research scientist and research associate professor at George Washington University. And a lot of that period actually I worked part time, because that's when I had children and they were young and so on and so forth, and I was really on soft money. Oh, in 1966-'67 actually I was a research associate at Hebrew University because my husband, who was also a psychologist, was interested in—well, worked in psycholinguistics and wanted to do some work on language development in a non Indo-European language. So I had a grant to study left-right attentional preferences in Hebrew speakers. And 1968-'71 I was a lecturer at the University of California at Santa Barbara, and '71-'73 I was at NYU in the psychology department. That was explicitly an interim

appointment, because we had moved to New York and so on. I spent a year at Brooklyn College 1973-'74 because I was really at that point looking for a permanent position. And then, from '74-'98 I worked at—I was in the psychology department at Barnard College. And actually, at Barnard I was really hired as department chair. They needed somebody. They really wanted to redo the psychology department. The person who had been chair there for 30 odd years was retiring, and they were looking for somebody who would bring sort of new life to the department, and that was great. It's really interesting, because at an earlier point in my life I wouldn't have been interested in a women's college, but at that point I had a whole different perception and I was very interested, and it offered me lots of interesting opportunities. And it was the first time that I was in an institution where at least half of the faculty were women. That was a nice experience. So what shall we go to?

Parker: Describe your experience as a teacher of child development research—

Braine: Right.

Parker: —trainer or—

Braine: Right. Well actually, you know, my teaching didn't really begin until in a sense almost 1970 when I was, you know, a—

Parker: Okay. We're starting side two with—we'll repeat—describe your experience as a teacher of child development research and a trainer of research workers. What courses have you taught, and some of the tension between teaching and research in the field of child development?

Braine: Okay. So I really—even though I got my degree in 1951, you know, I really wasn't part of a faculty until, you know, 1970—almost 1970. And well, you know, I've taught developmental psychology. I've taught cognitive development, perceptual development, infancy, developmental labs, and I've also taught, you know, in psychology generally, experimental psychology, intro psychology. I taught history of psychology. I've taught psychology and women, so—now, the thing is that I regret that I was not in a position really to train graduate students, because—although part of my deal when I went to Barnard was that I would—I taught a graduate course and I was going to have access to the graduate students at Columbia, but in fact, they were, they were interested in their own graduate students and didn't really send me graduate students. But I had some wonderful undergraduates, so it isn't that I was sort of totally lacking in this, but I think I was not in a position where I was part of a, you know, a graduate program and you trained graduate students. I really mostly taught undergraduates. And I have enjoyed that and I've had some great ones, but you know, it's a different situation. Now, as to this tension between teaching and research, I wasn't quite sure what somebody had in mind with that question unless they mean—well, there are only 24 hours in the day, and so you, you always have to choose how you're going to spend your time. Was that the import of the question do you think? Yeah, okay.

Parker: I'm thinking of Ed Zigler and how he makes a comment about how when you're a professor you use and abuse your students. I was thinking that for some I think there is—freshman graduate's training between wanting to be a really good teacher and getting around research and using graduate students to get your research done is the way you, the way you become a mentor or not a mentor to young people and how you use or abuse—

Braine: Ah yes.

Parker: —and I think it's a big issue right now.

Braine: I see. Okay. Well, I was rarely in that position. It was more a question of the amount of time available in 24 hours a day, or how much were you going to devote?

Parker: Right.

Braine: And you know, certainly Barnard values undergraduate teaching and, you know—

Parker: Number four; describe your role in putting theory into practice.

Braine: Right. Well—right. Well, as I say, I've never actually done—I haven't done applied work except that I always did enjoy when I, you know, talked—had an opportunity to talk to teachers—

Parker: Consulted with teachers—

Braine: Yeah. And you know, and teachers sometimes gave me wonderful examples, like one teacher in the preschool told me that, "Oh," she said, "Now I understand why—how it is that the children know how a picture should be hung." She said that, you know, that the children would draw their paintings, you know, they'd pin them up on easels, and then they'd put them down somewhere. And so then later the teacher might hang some of them up. And she said, "You know, these were sort of four year olds, and they don't draw realistic pictures. They painted patterns." Anyway, and she said that what puzzled her is that the child who drew the picture would tell her if she'd put it the wrong way. But she said the other children could tell her also. And she said she always thought that that was really very peculiar and she never understood it. But I think, well, these children knew the right way, and here's how it should be hung. But—so it's nice when somebody supports your ideas from their experience. So I think—you know, so I actually wished I had had—I would have liked to have had the opportunity to do more applied work, but you know, it didn't work out that way, and I enjoyed the few instances. But I think that's a great way in which developmental psychology has developed to have an area of applied developmental.

Parker: I could see where your work could very well be applicable with reading and pre-literacy and all that.

Braine: Yeah.

Parker: And also children who have developmental lags—

Braine: Yeah.

Parker: —visual, spatial issues, because a lot of children do—

Braine: Right.

Parker: —with their bodies as well as their—trying to understand their world.

Braine: Oh well. Another career.

Parker: Another career?

Braine: Right, right.

Parker: Okay. Looks like the next section has to do with your experience with SRCD.

Braine: Right. Well, I was trying to recall actually when I joined. It's a little hard to remember all that way back, but anyway, I think it was in the early sort of 1960s. And I think the first meeting I went to was in '58 or '59, and that's because my husband to be was giving a paper and I was—it was a symposia on Piaget. I went and the meeting was very small. I think that maybe there were 200 people there or something wonderful like that.

Parker: John Hagen has a history of the meetings—

Braine: Oh.

Parker: He showed me the little tiny six page thing that—

Braine: Oh, the program? Right, right, right. Yes, yes. So I, you know, I remember Bill Kessen. The meeting was small; the meeting was interesting. I thought it was great. But that's, you know—I don't really remember very much of the, you know, the event, yeah. And they didn't, you know—I used to go. I mean, that was the one meeting—SRCD was the one meeting that I always went to. It was only every two years, which was a help. The meetings were small. I gave up going to APA, which is just sort of too big and just not my thing. And I presented at many, if not most, of the SRCD meetings, and I enjoyed the meetings. I mean, that's where I saw other developmentalists who were interested in perception and cognition, and you know, we—it was small and I—it was a meeting I looked forward to, and I used to be—for many years I was a reviewer for, you know, the spatial panel—I've forgotten what it was called—yeah, the, you know, the committee that reviewed—

Parker: Right, right.

Braine: —sort of spatial things and I was a consulting editor on *Child Development* for five years I remember. And so, you know, I did some of the things and I liked SRCD. It was really a great meeting. I mean, I haven't gone recently because I haven't, you know, presented anything. I've forgotten when I last presented, but—well, probably somewhere in the mid '90s. I presented some of this work on the conflicts with authority. But I think—I don't know what else—what else I can say?

Parker: The governance?

Braine: The governance? No, I don't think I—I mean, I was never on a committee, so aside from doing, you know, being a consulting editor for *Child Development* or doing the other work, the reviewing work, I—

Parker: How about changes to occur in SRCD?

Braine: Well okay. Well, you know, there's honestly been an enormous increase in the complexity of the organization and the size of the meetings, you know. But that I think was in the journals, and in the range of topics. There's so much more work now in emotional and social development than there used to be. So I think that expansiveness is just marvelous. On the other hand, it's not unique to developmental psychology or to SRCD. I mean, I think that's happened in psychology as a whole. So are there things that I think have happened better at SRCD or more uniquely? And actually, okay, there are two things I think of. One is that I am really impressed by how SRCD has set up sort of institutional ways of connecting work in developmental psychology to social issues. You know, there is the *Social Policy Report* that comes out. Those are very good. I look forward to them. I read them with, you know, real interest. You know, there's the internship that SRCD has in government. And I think now there's supposed to be something new that I haven't looked at. But aren't they setting something up on the web in which they're going to put up articles that are of social relevance?

Parker: Yeah.

Braine: Yeah. So I mean, those are really some very specific things that SRCD is doing to make the—to make some of the applic—point out the applications in developmental psychology. So I think that's, you know, really a great development, and while that may have happened a little bit in other parts of psychology, not in such a systematic way. And I think the other way in which SRCD has been outstanding has been in working toward greater equity in representation of women and people of color. I don't know how well they've done on the people of color actually, but I know—I mean, I do appreciate that there's a real sensitivity there. But they've really done much better than psychology

as whole on representation of women and putting—and having women in positions of power, that is, as editors and so on. Because I actually looked into this, that is, I did actually do a sort of analysis. Well, it's actually—it's part of a history class. The class did it as a project, and we looked at numbers of women on editorial boards of different journals, and really child development, I know I would say developmental psychology, but certainly child development, was, you know, outstanding. And social psychology, it's really pretty poor even though there are plenty of women and so on. It's—yeah. Anyway, I haven't done it recently, so I should be careful of what I say. But okay, I do think that those are important changes in SRCD, ones that certainly I value.

Parker: The field?

Braine: Right.

Parker: Comment on the history of the field in the years you have participated—

Braine: Right, right. Yes, well okay. So we're bigger, right? We're more specialized, we do more work on social emotions and da, da, da, more psychologists in pediatrics, and more sophisticated study, all of these things, actually. But what I did sort of think about is I think that there are two sorts of discontinuities in the field. I would say one was the appearance of Piagetian theory. You know, I think it had a profound effect on developmental psychology and that didn't come from psychology. You know, that really—it didn't come from American psychology, which was very much, you know, learning theory in a conditioning paradigm. But then Piaget was introduced, and then there was Flavell's book in whatever, in 1960 something, and you know, and that just transformed American developmental psychology. It became cognitive as opposed to learning theory. So I think that was sort of a major discontinuity, although it fitted with the general shift into cognitive psychology—well, partly my own mentor, Hebb, was a contributor to that. There was Herbert Simon, there was Jerry Bruner, and later there was Neisser, so I mean, there was a movement in psychology, but I think the introduction of Piaget was a major discontinuity. The other sort of discontinuity I suppose, or the other major shift was an awareness of sexism, racism, to some extent heterosexism in the work in psychology. And I don't know that it's transformed developmental psychology, but it has had a real effect on people, I mean, the field is much more sensitive in evaluating trying to get some grants, being sure that they have both girls and boys. I mean, after all, it's not so long ago that we had work in which only boys would be studied. Yeah, so you know, that's a—I think of that as a discontinuity. It's not part of the getting bigger and so on, but it's really something important. And that of course, you know, came from the civil rights and the feminist movements. And I'm just trying to think if—whether there was anything else. Yes. Well, one could say a lot about this, but I don't think one need do that. I've always felt that it's somewhat ironic that it's feminism that has brought fathers into developmental psychology. I mean, I think that's great, but that comes from a feminist perspective. Oh yes. Part of this question is have your views concerning the importance of various issues changed over the years and how? And actually, I think in a way they have. I mean, I think that my values, you know, my social values sort of play a bigger role in my evaluation of work, of how the field is developing and what needs to be addressed. I think it is extremely important that we are more sensitive to racism—issues of racism, sexism, classism and so on, and that we also have more of that—well, we've got applied psychology. We are really more concerned about how our work relates, connects to what's going on in society. We really do have an obligation to the taxpayers, you know? I mean, I don't think that other people should tell academics, you know, what to study, but I do think that you have to try to make—that you have a responsibility somehow to try to make connections, and that I welcome any changes in SRCD that facilitate those, and I think that there have been some developments there. So what can I say? It's clear that my politics are showing, right? But—

Parker: Good for you.

Braine: —that's okay. I mean—

Parker: What are your hopes and fears for the future?

Braine: Oh well, okay. Well, you know, I have this idea that maybe technology is going to facilitate collaborative and more longitudinal work. I just think because it's so much easier both to communicate and share data on the collaborative side, but longitudinally—I think it's much easier to do longitudinal work these days. I don't know whether more people are. So I think that would be a wonderful thing. And of course, I hope that the work on inclusion, you know, is going to continue and be even more characteristic of developmental psychology than it is now. But you know, I'll tell you, on the fear side I have sort of an old fashioned concern, and that is that people, researchers are going to lose touch with the people they're researching. You know, I—it goes against the grain for me that some of my colleagues will tell me with great pleasure, "Oh, I really have this study set up beautifully. A person can come in and they can sit down at the computer and, you know, go through the list of questions, and then the teaching—the assistant will debrief them, and boy, in a day I can collect data on 50 people," or whatever. And I think, Gee, I feel that there are so many insights or ideas that I have gotten from watching children or talking with them or talking to adults, because I've done a lot of work on adult perception as well. So I don't know. I say this is an old fashioned, I feel, concern, but it is a concern that I have and maybe it just is my age, my whatever, my—how do you put it—anyway, my period of life. I worry about the separation of research and participant in the computer age.

Parker: Yeah.

Braine: Well, but you see, I think it offers you so many opportunities. There's no question about that.

Parker: But it does give you the opportunity to be less involved.

Braine: To distance yourself—

Parker: Yeah.

Braine: —from the people that you work with. And well, I don't know. I worry about that.

Parker: Well, personal notes—

Braine: Personal notes? Well, I felt that, you know, I was lucky that my husband—at least the second marriage, which was really a long marriage. The first one was sort of brief, you know? It was nice that he was also a psychologist and, you know, we had so many common interests, and well, my children are just great. They've played a very important part of my life, facilitated my work. Every now and again somebody would say something or do something that I would say, "Oh, that makes me think about…" you know. But—

Parker: How old—what, what do you have, how many children?

Braine: Oh, I have two, a boy and a girl. And I—my son is the one who—he and his family live in France and they're the ones who have two children. So I'm delighted that I have two grandchildren, although I'm sorry they're so far away. And my daughter, bless her soul, now lives in New York. So my son actually is an astronomer. My daughter is—ended up with a Ph.D. in sociology. So she is the—I think not interested in children. And—but I am very pleased that she is living in New York. It's nice to have a child that's closer by. We were a family that did—we were sort of outdoorsy folks and we did a lot of hiking and some camping, and we had a sailboat for a number of years. Those were the kinds of things I think that we liked to do. I mean, you know, my husband and I were also theater people and music people, but we also did like, you know, like the outdoors and, you know, try to be environmentalists when we can, all of those things. Well, I don't know that it had much bearing on my scientific interests and contributions, but—except insofar as they have a bearing on your mental health, right? I don't know. Anything else that you—

Parker: Yeah. Is there anything else that you—

Braine: —that I feel a need to say? For seven years, you know, I worked halftime. Well, that was probably because I really wanted to spend—having had children late I really wanted to spend, you know, some time with them. But on the other hand, you know, I really—it just brought home to me what—how poor the alternatives were. That is, there wasn't a good, you know, childcare system. Well, that's still true in the United States—

Parker: Still struggling—

Braine: We're still struggling and it is appalling, and I can tell you that in France they have a wonderful childcare system. Yeah, a lot of Europe, that's right. So actually, I don't think that there's anything, I mean, that really matters here.

Parker: Well—but it's been really enjoyable.

Braine: Well, but I think the thanks are all on my side.

[End of Interview]