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**PARENTS OF THE FIELD.**

*Interviewee; Professor J. David Singer*

*Date:*

*Venue; Ann Arbor, Michigan.*

*Interviewer; Dr. Chris Mitchell.*

Interviewer: We're here as part of our "Parents of the Field" study with our friend and colleague, Professor David Singer, of the University of Michigan, and we're talking about the origins of the field of "peace studies" or "conflict studies" or "conflict analysis and resolution". There's really no need to introduce Professor Singer, so I'm just going to go straight and do the first question, which is: David, in the early days of peace and conflict studies, people came from a whole range of intellectual backgrounds. What was yours, and how did you get into this field?

J. David Singer: Interesting question. I'm not sure I can answer it in sufficient detail, but some people say that since my birthday was Pearl Harbor Day [that happened on] my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday – and like most American kids in 1941, the idea of war was fairly glorious. And I immediately announced that I was going to enlist as soon as I was 17. To make a long story short, on my 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, I went down to the Navy recruiting station and did sign up... I signed up for a program that would have let me finish high school. I still had about a year to go. And then, I would start training to become an aircraft carrier pilot. And that was considered the hottest thing, in those days. And that was the one that was most competitive. So as a matter of fact, I did start out in the Navy in late '43. I spent eight months in flight prep school.

Interviewer: Yes.

J. David Singer: And when I saw the boys in the class ahead of me dying in training and going down in fiery crashes, I thought that wasn't so smart. So I applied to get transferred into training to become a deck and gunnery officer, which I did. They sent me to Duke University to finish my alleged education, and then, the war ended just before we finished - but I signed on for another year. Spent a year at sea on the battle ship *Missouri*.

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Interviewer: Yes.

J. David Singer: I was too young to be on it for the signing of the peace treaty.

Interviewer: Yes.

J. David Singer: As a matter of fact, I should confess that when we heard about the Japanese surrender, a lot of the boys in my class were, with me, a little bit disappointed. We had invested heavily in our training, and most of us had very romantic notions about what it would be to be a naval officer, out there in the Pacific. And so in any event, I signed on for another year. Spent that year mostly in the Arctic and the north Atlantic. We were trying out cold weather gear and we were chasing Russian submarines. Then, one night, we had a terrible accident, in which my ship was hit with star shell [fired] from another Navy ship. We had a big explosion, big fires, and... I think it's important to my story. I was officer of the deck after this accident. We had peeled off from the rest of the task group, and we were sailing alone in the Arctic. The surgeon called up from sickbay and asked me if I could bring the ship to a smoother course, which was kind of interesting. I immediately did so.

Interviewer: Yes.

J. David Singer: The captain was on the bridge, and he said, "Singer, what are you doing?" And I repeated the conversation. He said, "You wouldn't do this in wartime, would you?" And I said something smart-aleck like, "Captain, I think you don't know, but the war is over," which, in any event, he made me put the ship back on the earlier course. The man, who was being operated on, died, and it turned out to be my own chief petty officer. So that was a rather traumatic experience.

Interviewer: Yes.

J. David Singer: And the next day, then, I went in to see the captain and told him I wanted to get out of the Navy and he said he was happy to oblige. And a few months later, we were back in the States, and I got released on inactive duty.

Interviewer: Yes.

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J. David Singer: Now then – to carry the story a little bit further – in about 1948, the people at NYU, New York University, started a graduate program called United Nations and World Affairs. It was on [at] night and weekends. And I was, then, working in New York. I had a full-time job, but I was also up to my ears in the World Federalist Movement.

Shortly after I came out of the Navy in '46, I began to find out what was going on between the Russians and ourselves. And it was very clear to me that American policy was no more sensible than Russian policy. And that led me to think that we needed to strengthen the UN, and we needed to make the superpowers behave better. So I then, for the next three years, was going to school at night, finished a Masters, had been active in the World Federalist, and other peace groups during those years.

Interviewer: OK.

J. David Singer: And then, when the Korean War erupted, I decided I'd better go back on active duty. At the time, I was the training officer for Construction Battalion. And I didn't want to be a CB officer out in Korea because that's very dangerous, and you're very vulnerable.

And you're in forward areas without any weapons of your own. So I contacted a friend of mine in the Pentagon and told him that if he could get me reclassified back as a gunnery officer, I'd immediately volunteer. And a couple of weeks later, that was done. A week or two after that, I was on a new ship in Norfolk Virginia – on a heavy cruiser called the *Newport News*. We expected to go to Korea, but we didn't. At the last minute, we were transferred to the Sixth Fleet, the Mediterranean fleet.

Interviewer: Yes.

J. David Singer: And I spent the next 12 months out there. Very interesting. Very informative. No combat, but a lot of good experience.

And then, I had another run-in with another commanding officer who had taken over our ship after about a year that I'd been there. And this fellow was really a wreck. He hadn't been to sea since the end of World War II. He was a very high-strung, high anxiety guy, and the ship was really going to hell in a week. So the other officers came to me and said – I'll never forget this – "Singer, you're the most senior reserve officer on the ship. You've gotta go tell the captain to shape up." And my first reaction was, "I'm not gonna touch that." We know a lot about mutiny in the Navy.

Interviewer: Yes.

J. David Singer: I thought about it for a day or two, and then, I thought, "You know... I'm not gonna stay in the Navy." Again, it was a quick decision. Even though I had thought seriously about a career after World War II, and I thought seriously again at the end of the Korean War – but seeing what this guy could do, I thought, "This is crazy." So I went in to see him, tried to tell him, in a fairly relevant way, that he was really screwing up the world's best ship. He was livid, and he assured me he'd get me off that ship the first thing he could, and we were back in the States maybe a month or two later. And there were orders for me to be transferred, and they made me an instructor of seamanship at the Officer Candidate School.

This would have been about 1953. And to make a long story short, I was a very successful teacher, which I didn't know. And I decided, "Well, I've got an MA in World Politics. I'm going to go back to graduate school, get a Ph.D., and study and teach."

Interviewer: Yes.

J. David Singer: Well, I, indeed, did that. I was told that you'd better go to either Columbia or Harvard. A Ph.D. from NYU is not worth much. But on the other hand, Columbia and Harvard were willing to take me, but they wanted me to start all over again. And by then, I was, let's see, 26 years old – a little old to be a first-year graduate student. So I finished at NYU, got my first job teaching at Vassar College –

Interviewer: OK.

J. David Singer: I was, by then, still very active in the World Federalists. And I can continue, but the story goes on.

Interviewer: Well, why don't you tell me how you got involved in the... program here at Michigan ?

J. David Singer: Yes... we talked about serendipity and people's lives and careers. At Vassar, I had a very gifted, young student, whose name was Rosemary Klineburg. Her daddy was Otto Klineburg, a very famous psychologist.

Interviewer: Okay.

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J. David Singer: She liked what I was teaching so much that she took me home to her parents. They lived not too far from Poughkeepsie. I was there at a dinner party. After the dinner party, Otto asked me to stay around a little bit. And when the guests had gone – and the guests included Margaret Meade – a very distinguished anthropologist and psychologist and a whole bunch of others. And he said, "Young man, you've got a great future ahead of you, but you got to do two things. First, you've got to improve your French. It's really abysmal," which I agreed. But then, more seriously, he said, "And you've got to learn more about scientific methods." And I already was beginning to be aware of that. He, then, told me that **[inaudible]** had a program for science and political science to tool up in the behavioral sciences and in modern methods. And he said, "If you apply, I'll give you a recommendation." I did, and he did. And that gave me a whole year at Harvard in the social relations department, where I really did nothing but study and learn. And as a matter of fact, my mentor was none other than young Herbert Kelman – whose name you probably recognize.

Herb Kelman had just finished his own Ph.D. and had won the Kurt Lewin award for the best dissertation in social psychology that year.

Interviewer: He never mentioned that.

J. David Singer: Yes. It was a brilliant dissertation. It did lead to a couple of interesting published articles. So I spent a year with Herb and some of the other “peaceniks” up there. And of course, that's when, I think, was my first meeting with John Burton. I think so. So I was still quite active in the World Federalists. I had certainly spent time with Roger Fisher and then a very gifted, young biologist by the name of Matthew Messelson. He's famous for showing that during the Vietnam War, what was being claimed by the Americans as a poison was nothing but bee droppings. You may remember that from the story.

Interviewer: Yes, I remember that. The “Yellow Rain” story.

J. David Singer: So the year at Harvard was very interesting. Then, there was a conference, toward the end of that year, in Boston. One of the speakers was Kenneth Boulding. I was one of the speakers, as well. He and I were chatting after the thing. And he asked me if I had a job for next year, and I said no. He said, "There's a one year opening at Michigan in Political Science. You should apply." And

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he's already told me about plans for the Center for Research on Conflict Resolution. That sounded, to me, like exactly my dish of tea. And as a result, I applied for the job, was interviewed, got the job, arrived at Michigan in – let's say – late summer of 1958 – [and I] was immediately contacted by Dean Pruitt, who was one of the psychologists working with Boulding and with Elise Boulding, and Daniel Katz, Bob Angel. And he invited me to come to the conflict resolution seminars, which I was delighted to do. We used to meet at – I'd say once every week. Kenneth usually held forth at the beginning. Elise was the *rapporteur*.

And the more I listened to what these other people were doing, the more engaged I became. And so I was quite active in helping get the Center started. The *Journal* [of Conflict Resolution] was already under way – and was off to a reasonably promising start. But I had a lot of trouble. The Political Science Department was very hostile to the creation of this Center, and you can see why. Even though the scheme was to study war and peace in a detached, scientific way, the political scientists who were – I like to say – well embedded in the “Cold Warrior” class [and] thought that you don't need to do any research on this, comrades. It's very simple. It's the good guys and the bad guys, and it's us against the Russians. So what kind of research are you doing? You fellows must be subversive.

And the chairman, several times, called me aside, dressed me down, and said, "You've got to decide. Are you a political scientist or a peace researcher?" And I insisted that I thought I could be both. He frowned a lot. He gave me a tremendous amount of grief during the first year. For example, I gave a public talk before the Ann Arbor Women's City Club. I looked out at this audience, and I would say a third of these ladies were pregnant, and I was talking about testing of nuclear weapons. That was what I'd been asked to talk about. And when I described some of the [birth] effects of cesium and strontium-90 and so forth, a lot of these people didn't know anything about that. The chairman called me in the next day, and he said, "What do you know about nuclear weapons?" And I said, "Well, I've done a lot of homework." And he said, "Well, that's not enough. You don't know anything about it. Shut up." And as the year wore on, I was in more and more hot water with him, but I was more and more committed to an [idea of what I] wanted to do. And I was already very committed to the whole idea of peace “research”, even [if] I was never committed to peace “studies”. Several years later – if I can shorten the story a bit – I ended up back – I was fired at the end of my second year in the Poli Sci. Department here. And happily, by then, I had two job

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offers. Not one – but two ! Go full-time into the Mental Health Research Institute, here, as a full-time researcher - and it really was not mental health, as much as general systems. It was a very exciting, creative bunch of people, and you know some of those folks. In the interim, I had an offer to teach at the Naval War College in Rhode Island for six months. I had already accepted that job, so I made a deal with the Mental Health Research Institute, whose director was James Grier Miller, and I had a very interesting time teaching at the War College.

I gave a number of lectures that got me into big trouble. My inaugural lecture, I decided I would show the similarities between Soviet and American strategic policy, which was not, politically, very prudent. And at the end of my lecture – I'll never forget this – normally, American naval officers are very courteous, and I was expecting a lot of applause. They sat on their hands. The auditorium was silent...this was probably during what they call Global Strategy Week.

The earlier speaker was, what I always call, Wild Bill Elliot – William Yandall Elliot, a very hardened Cold Warrior. A retired Army – I think it was Army - general. And just as I was going up to the podium to start my lecture, he jumped out of his chair, walked up – very large man, already reeking of his morning bourbon – pushed me aside, and said, "Gentlemen, I would like to introduce the spokesman for the surrender lobby," which created a little bit of a set of expectations. I... went ahead with my lecture. As I say, I finished to deafening silence. The next day, the admiral, Bernard Austin, made a public statement saying that he thought it was a terrific lecture –

Interviewer: How curious.

J. David Singer: – and the naval officers ought to hear these perspectives. And it's funny. He actually ended up his career in a fairly dramatic way. He chaired the Board of Inquiry when the first American submarine sunk. I don't remember the name of it now. It would have been in, I believe, the early '60s. And it sunk, I think, off the New Hampshire coast. So I finished my tour of duty there.

While I was there, I wrote the first draft of a book called, "*Deterrence: Arms Control and Disarmament –*,"

Interviewer: Yes, I remember.

J. David Singer: Which was my effort to look at military strategy in a somewhat more symmetric way, and, of course, a much less [one sided] way.

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I remember, then, I came back to Michigan, made some final changes in draft, sent the book off to – I think it was an American publisher. I think it was Knopf. And after about two months, the editor phoned me, and he said, "Young man, this is a great book, but I can't touch it. It would get me into trouble." I, then, sent it to another American publisher. I got exactly the same response. I... sent it to Ohio State press which had announced a competition for the best book on national security policy. And man, it was a very interesting culmination. There were three men on that committee. I remember the names of two of them. One was – I think one of them was Joe Coffee [inaudible]. He was on the faculty at Columbia, but he was in the National Security Council, under President Kennedy.

In any event, they told me that they thought it was the best book of the year, but they couldn't possibly publish it. They couldn't possibly give a prize because the Merghon Center that was sponsoring it had money from a retired Army officer who had recruited a bunch of very hawkish military historians. So the book got published by Ohio State press. It was – I guess it was my first – it must have been my second book. I had already published a book on financing the League and the United Nations.

Interviewer: Was that your Ph.D... ?

J. David Singer: The financing book was my Ph.D.

Interviewer: Okay.

J. David Singer: The *Deterrence* book was a labor of love. And there was an effort, really, to meet the hawks, as far as I could go, on their assumptions, most of which I thought were preposterous. But I was wanting to grant them that and still try to demonstrate that the arguments they made were dangerous and unfounded.

And in the book, I spoke about the dangers of ballistic missile defense. I, certainly, wrote about the dangers of developing any kind of first-strike strategy, and I also wrote about the dangers of fallout and evacuation plans.

I might say that, subsequently to publishing the book, I was approached by a company here in Ann Arbor called Bendix Systems Division. It was kind of a consulting firm. It's a firm that, originally, was in the business of pneumatic brakes, but they had spread out and they had a division that was doing National Security. And they asked me if I would be a consultant. I had already met some of these fellows. I had helped them put on a



conference – the First International Conference on Arms Control and Disarmament. It was “international” because we had one Canadian and one Russian ! And it was not very international, but it was an interesting conference. And the men out there liked what I said, and I began to work with them as a consultant.

I did classified work. I actually wrote a minority report on civil defense and why I thought it was a bad idea. Later on, I wrote another minority report on why ballistic missile defense was a bad idea. And that, allegedly, went all the way up to the office of the Secretary Defense, who, by then, was Robert McNamara, whom I'd say was Ann Arbor's favorite son. So that's pretty much how I got into this.

And I guess - one more connection - is that somewhere in about 1962, Kenneth Boulding was able to raise a little bit of outside money, and he asked those of us connected to the Center what we would do with this money. And he asked us to write up short research designs. And I wrote up my design, which was – I was going to go back to the work of Lewis Richardson in England and Quincy Wright at the University of Chicago, and was going to start a research project, building on what they did.

Interviewer: Right.

J. David Singer: And to make that story short, I got the grant – a very small grant – and got about, I think, about \$30,000.00 for two years. And I called a couple of my colleagues over in the history department. I asked them to send me their best grad students. And among those was a lad named Melvin Small. And Small and I got started on the project. The first task, of course, was to identify all international wars since 1816. I'd decided that was a good historical cutting point. Once we got started on that, I had a fellowship arranged by Johan Galtung to – I had a Fulbright to spend the year at the Peace Research Institute in Oslo –

Interviewer: Okay.

J. David Singer: – which was also, then, under construction. And it was a very interesting, challenging year. There were some very good Norwegian social scientists [and Johan], as you can imagine, was an interesting, if provocative, colleague. There was a fair amount of tension, certainly, between us. He [has] very domineering personality. And then, he had no trouble interrupting me and taking over my seminars. And I think, after about the third or fourth week, I said something like, "Well, Johan, what you have to

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say is interesting, but these people have heard you before. And I've come from halfway around the world so they could hear slightly different perspectives. Why don't you either keep quiet or get out?" And there was a – I never forget – there was a gasp because, apparently, nobody had ever spoken to Johan that way, maybe before or since because he's a very imposing character.

Interviewer: Indeed.

J. David Singer: So that was a very good year. And when I came back, Mel Small and the other [research assistants] had finished the first phase of the project, and that's really how the project got started.

Interviewer: Okay. That's that story, [but] what happened to the Center, here? I've always wondered about that. It was so influential on so many people, and then, suddenly, it wasn't there anymore.

J. David Singer: Well, Chris, it was not sudden. I said they were in trouble from day one, partly because the Political Science Department was very hostile and had resisted its creation. Nevertheless, there was enough support in different parts of the campus. The dean liked the idea. Bob Angel, the sociologist, had a tremendous amount of prestige [He came from the Angel family, for which our major buildings have been named. But Bob Angel's an absolutely marvelous, powerful guy. Very intelligent. He certainly – he took people, like myself, under his wing because he could see that we were [an] endangered species from day one.

If I can digress, the chairman of our department was James K. Pollock, a very conventional, brilliant guy, but quite right wing, I would say. Certainly, an enthusiastic Cold Warrior and a good Bolshevik basher. And he mobilized a number of the men in my department to criticize.

And at the same time, there were two political scientists who would occasionally come to the seminars. One was Russ [inaudible], and the other was Harold Jacobson. Neither of these gents is still alive. I guess I can say that they were not really very enthusiastic, but another problem was that Ken Boulding was probably as indifferent to administration and budgeting as a man could be. So even though he was a brilliant, charismatic, fascinating, constructive person, he alienated a lot of people.

For example, Ken used to, periodically – I have to smile – chain himself to the flagpole in the middle of the campus to demonstrate how America had become a prisoner of war. And you can imagine some of the criticism, some of the complaints !

Interviewer: Yes, I can !

J. David Singer: And it was – a lot of the Chairmen of the departments in those days – remember, we're looking at – what – 1964 maybe. And in those days, a lot of the Michigan departments were headed, not by chairs, but by heads. And in the American system, a head, really, was a lifetime tenure. And most of these heads ran their departments like little fiefdoms. And I remember, Jim Pollock had, among his allies, the chairman of the English Department and the chairman of the Anthropology Department. And that was a little bit of a right wing [group]. So the Center was under the gun. And Kenneth [Boulding] didn't want to do it. The [Center's] administration was left to these two young guys and they were both very progressive in their politics - rather casual about running the budget. And among the things that happened was first of all, the end of each fiscal year, we were incapable of accounting for the little bit of money we were getting from the university, which can cause a little bit of trouble.

And then, in the late '60s – '67, '68 – the Black Action Movement was getting organized on this campus – and these were African-American students – some not students. Quite militant. And [someone], to the best of my recollection, invited the Black Action Movement leaders to join and share the little headquarters we had. We had a small, old cottage on the campus. And these fellows were brought in, and about the same time, another radical group called the Students for Democratic Society, SDS – and some of these militant youngsters, like Tom Hayden and one of the – I can't remember the other boy's name right now – also were encouraged to use the facilities.

We were also publishing the *Journal* out of the same little building. It was an awfully charming little place. The morale and the camaraderie was great. A lot of us had lunch together a couple times a week. There was a very senior man from the journalism department who was one of our supporters, and then, later on, a younger journalist named William Porter, who had come to Michigan from Iowa. And so the *Journal* was there. The Center was there. And I could see the Center was in trouble.

Interviewer: Yes.

J. David Singer: About that time, I decided that it was time to turn the Center over to real professionals. My reasoning being that psychologists and sociologists who were very interested but didn't have the scientific

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scholarly background, and, I agreed with the political scientists that this really was a political science discipline problem – war and peace. See, we were not particularly worried about domestic conflict - interpersonal conflict, or even racial affairs - until later on. We were primarily interested in the Cold War and what kind of research could we do that might shed some light on this major power arms race – major power armed rivalry - by studying history in a systematic way.

And so that's exactly what I was doing. I, then, persuaded my colleagues that we should bring in a senior political scientist who had a lot of experience as an administrator, and would have more credibility with the Political Science Department. I persuaded my friend, Charles McClelland who was, then, at southern California, as I remember – to take the job. He had a joint appointment in the Center and in the Department of Political Science. Not everybody in the Department was delighted with this.

He got here. Two things went wrong. First, his kids did not like the cold weather, and they proceeded to hotfoot it back to sunny California. Not long after that, as I remember, his wife went back. And then, at the same time, he was getting flak from the other political scientists. He was not enjoying the camaraderie, which I enjoyed only partially because I was certainly a pariah in the department. But...if you're a successful teacher, and you're publishing well, they cut you a lot of slack, which means that I was able to get away with my “fellow traveling pro-Communist” research.

And so McClelland stayed only one academic year, and he left.

Interviewer: And he went back to California ?

J. David Singer: He went back to California. At that point, I'm not even sure who became the acting director, but whoever it was was not very capable. And by then, Pollock had been able to get one of the men in my department, by the name of George **Grassmuck** - a very nice guy, but a Republican who had already served {or soon would serve] in the Nixon White House. George became something like Vice Provost for International Affairs and his job was to dismantle the Center. And he found it a very easy task because the Center had very little support on the campus. They were unable to account for the money. They had taken in two other groups that were considered too radical. And in due course, the Regents were persuaded to take away the charter of the Center, and that was that.

Interviewer: But that left you high and dry in the Political Science Department.

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J. David Singer: Well, not quite. You talk about serendipity. James Miller hired me, and I had, what I thought, was a tenure job as what's called a Senior Research Associate. And when I came back from Oslo, which would have been 1964, I came back half time in Mental Health and half time in Political Science.

Interviewer: Okay.

J. David Singer: This was a very fortunate thing ! When Pollock was finally eased out of the chairmanship, he was replaced by Arthur Bromage. This was about the middle of my year in Oslo, and Arthur sent me a cable inviting me back into the Department with tenure, half-time. And of course, never has a telegram been responded to so quickly because I would say that for the following 22 years, I had the best political science job in the country, if not in the whole western world. It was an absolutely marvelous job, teaching half time, on-and-off sharing the World Politics program in political science, getting a lot of writing and research done.

The Correlates of War project was moving along, and I think I can say that by the late '70s, our project had begun to encourage and spin-off a lot of similar research in England and Scandinavia and Japan, Germany. Well, I guess that's about it. So there we are, I would say. The Center is dead, but the Correlates project is alive and well.

I was able to bring in outside money, largely from – this is an interesting point - the National Science Foundation. Now, most laymen would think that a government agency would be the most careful and anxious about research that looks a little bit “unpatriotic”, but they were terrific, which I cannot say for Ford, Rockefeller, Carnegie, or MacArthur. Over the years, I have seen almost nothing from any of the private foundations. I, once, had a small grant from [inaudible] one of the smaller foundations but much of my funding came from the National Science Foundation.

Interviewer: The NSA ?.

J. David Singer: And they liked what we were doing. And of course, we had no trouble getting published, which was also a very pleasant surprise. And I was publishing in pre-scientific journals, like *World Politics*, *Journal of Politics*, *International Security*, as well as our more – let's say – our house journals, which would mean the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* and *Journal of Peace Research*, from Oslo – *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, which was from the peace science group, and another journal called *International*

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*Interactions*, and even *International Studies Quarterly*. I might even say that our group – let's call us the “quantitative peace researchers” – really were able to dominate the International Studies Association, so much so that I was elected as President in – I guess I would say the late 1970s. [We could find that out.] So, there we are !

Interviewer: I want to go back to something you said a little while ago about the fact that you were very much involved in the idea of “peace research”, but this is not the same thing as “peace studies”, which you [by implication] said was something that you weren't happy with. What's the distinction in your mind, and what are the shortcomings of peace studies that rather made you go for the other title?

J. David Singer: Fair enough. If I can hark back to my early days as a young instructor at Vassar College, I went out all gung ho...

Interviewer: You were back to Vassar ?

J. David Singer: In my early years as an instructor at Vassar college, I came out there thinking, "Well, I've got a Ph.D. I'm well educated. I know a lot of diplomatic history. I know a lot of military history. I know a lot of international law. I'm going to really be able to answer questions about foreign policy, war and peace, and so forth." And by the time I was in my second year teaching at Vassar, which was ... an all-woman's college in those days. And these students were not only very smart, they were really precocious. They asked really good questions. I mean, they got “out of the box”. And I, increasingly, realized that half the time, I didn't know what the hell I was talking about – that I was giving them conventional, historical explanations.

And I was, increasingly, dissatisfied with them, so that when I met Professor Klineburg, and he talked to me about tooling up in scientific method I was all ready ready to join the choir. And at the end of the year at Harvard, I was really an enthusiast. I was a true behavioral scientist.

And in a more contemporary language, I was a true “quantroid”. And by then, I was... more than able to see the inadequacy of most of the traditional research being done on war and peace and on foreign policy, and on national security. And it seemed to me that we could do better. And of course, this takes you back to 1962, '63, when Kenneth Boulding said, "What would you do if I got you a grant?"

And by then, I had read Lewis Richardson very thoroughly [and] was really impressed because he was truly a pioneer. He was a meteorologist [who] taught physics in places. He was a pacifist, served in the French Ambulance Corp. during World War I. He came home and said, "Let's find out what these [historians] and political scientists tell us about war."

The story has it that one night at dinner, he slammed down one of these history books and announced to his family, "I can do better than that." And he had been writing papers, but he couldn't get them published. He published one paper in 1929 on the psychology of war. But a lot of his other stuff lay unpublished. He couldn't even often get the chance to deliver the papers at meetings. The Royal Society was a royal – how shall we say – stick in the mud bunch of guys. Probably not very different from, let's say, the American Council on Foreign Relations - I might say, from whom John Kennedy recruited a fair number of his national security staff with disastrous results. He, then, even – by reading Richardson and then, by going back and re-reading Quincy Wright – every grad student probably read a little bit of Quincy Wright, but very few of them had the opportunity to go to the early [edition] – all those marvelous charts and graphs. And I thought, "You boys are doing it right."

There are no other scholars who impress me. Pitirim Sorokin, who was a Russian sociologist - came to the States in the 20's - actually wrote, I think, one of the best papers I've ever read on how you estimate casualties in warfare. It was in Volume 3 of his opus *Social and Cultural Dynamics* - and Volume 3 was "Revolution and Wars" I remember...

I think there are some others – [I once] ran into the work of [Jean DuBlanc] Ivan Bloch... He was a Polish fellow, an economist and a banker – a very successful banker, who had written – as I remember, it was five volumes called *The Future of War*, but it really wasn't about the future. The first four volumes were the history of war - the technology, the strategy, the politics of warfare. And then, the final volume, which was fourth or the fifth, was the future of war.

And if I can digress, it's an interesting tale. His study on the history of war was fascinating. He's particularly interested in the economics and technology of war. In his final volume, he laid out some conclusions. He said that technology means that a small number of men in trenches behind barbed wire but with rapid-fire machine-guns, which the French called the *milletreuse* could hold off [many more] – this was his argument, and he was basing it, to some extent, on the Franco-Prussian War.

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Interviewer: So this is pre-1914, of course.

J. David Singer: Yes. Yes. He was writing in the 1880s and 1890s. And he argued the small bunch of men could hold off an overwhelming invading army, therefore, making aggressive war no long feasible. He, then, said, "And if there were any effort to overcome that, it would cost so much, it would be economically infeasible." That lead him – remember, he was an economist - and I've been making fun of economists all my life, even Kenneth Boulding, who is one of my favorite economists. I said – as an economist, he's got to say, "Well, war isn't feasible anymore... Reasonable men and women will find another way to deal with international conflict." And within a few years, we were in our blood in World War I. And World War I, in a sense, completely wore out every one of DuBlanc's [Bloch's] predictions – – except the third one.

And if I can jump forward, I have an American colleague named John Mueller, who has recently written a book called *The Remnants of War*. He argues there, and in earlier papers, that the bloodshed of World War I is the event that really began the end of war. I think he's quite wrong. I've just written a [paper] about a month ago, in which I point out – if he had stuck with his early research, he was a very good quantroid.

Matter of fact, in about 1959 – no, 1969 – he published a book that was... and I published a book in 1968 called *Quantitative International Politics* - He published an anthology that was a response to this, and the subtitle was *A Non-Evangelical Approach*, making fun of my [book] ...

He and I remain good friends, but he thought that the bloodbath had started the transition away from war. It may have. And a lot of other authors – Werner Levi in, I believe, the late '70s, saying that war was already obsolete. And then, of course, we had the long history – the Alfred Nobel, who thought that a black powder would bring war to an end. And then, the famous quote from Winston Churchill that "peace will be the sturdy son of terror, and the twin brother of horror." Something like that. And he even used the metaphor... "The Russians and the Americans are like two scorpions in a bottle. They can't afford to bite one another. They'd both be dead." And of course, we came, in my judgment, mighty close during the Cuban crisis.

And matter of fact, a more recent book – I think it's called *Limits of Safety* – by a man named Sagan, points out, in his book, the number of times that the Russians and the Americans have gone to the brink.

And I've always been able to test my good judgment and good luck. And I can remember, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, I had two infants. My wife was beside herself. And I said, "Not to worry. These guys know what they're doing." And of course, as the documents came out in the years following, it's clear they didn't know what they were doing, and that we really lucked out because there were certainly a number of hawks on the Russian side and the American side, who were ready to go. They thought we would nuke them.

And the Americans, by then, of course, had quite a superiority, even though McNamara and Kennedy, who I have to say knew better – and since I had security clearance not too many years afterward, I was pretty convinced that they should have known that sure, there was a missile gap, but it was in the favor of the U.S... but they – the election campaign, in which the Democrats were getting back at the Republicans –

Interviewer: At Eisenhower ?

J. David Singer: That's right. [There was the argument over] "Who lost China?"

Interviewer: Yes.

J. David Singer: And I can tell you who lost China. Everybody lost China. And it was not Republicans or Democrats. So they were using the stuff that the Russians – getting the upper hand, and we need an administration that's going to be tough. And I would even argue. People ask me, "Well, how would you explain why the Russians put missiles into Cuba?" And I tell the story, which may or may not be apocryphal. And [Khrushchev] was at a conference on the Black Sea with his Minister of Defense, whose name I'm now blocking on. And –

Interviewer: Was it Zhukov?

J. David Singer: No. Zhukov never had that job. Remember, Zhukov was the Russian hero in World War II. In any event, the story is that the Minister of Defense pointed over there, and he said, "That's where the Americans, in Turkey, have those missiles aimed at us."

And Khrushchev apparently said, "Is there some way to deal with that?" And the story has it that the Defense Minister said, "Cuba." And even if the story is apocryphal, it makes very good sense. If one side is looking down close over the horizon –

warheads – nuclear warheads – on medium-range ballistic missiles. That creates a pretty high level of anxiety because it meant that the Americans were equipped to launch a pre-emptive first strike. And that did not originate with McNamara or Kennedy.

It had been around for years, mostly at the Rand Corporation, which was a think tank, funded by – controlled by the Air Force. And I know that in the late '50s, I was already locking horns with the people at the Rand Corporation. I remember I published this book finally, I think, in... '62. But I'd already written papers, beginning in about 1957. As a matter of fact, I was writing articles for *The Nation* magazine on national security policy, beginning in the late '50s. So I was doing a lot of homework.

I had not planned in graduate school or afterward, to go into national security policy. I was an enthusiast for international organization and international law. And I started out really believing that that was the way to go. But I could see that the world was not going to wait, and that the Russians and the Americans - and allies on both sides - had bought into an arms race that looked very ominous.

If I could even back up a few steps, when I left the Navy in late '46 – it may have been early '47 – I remember suddenly feeling that how come... we didn't know this, of course. In those days, when you're at sea, you're not in touch with the world. And we'd come into port, and we'd get back copies of *Time* and *Life* magazine. And that was really it. Kind of ironic !

At a peace science meeting about five years ago, it was held at Yale University in New Haven. And it was in the Henry Luce building. And Henry Luce – I would not hesitate to say – was a major architect of the Cold War. He was a guy who thought that this was going to be the American century, and the small detail was to make sure we pushed the Russians out of the way [on the way to] the American century.

Interviewer: A little premature, I think.

J. David Singer: Yes.

Interviewer: David, going back to the question that we started this one on, which is peace “studies” versus peace “research”. What do you think was the major thing about peace studies, which put you off?

J. David Singer: Well, I started on that slippery slope, by talking about how inadequate I felt in my teaching – my first two years as an instructor at Vassar, and then, when Otto Klineburg told me I

ought to tool up... it was during that year that I became a fairly ardent behavioral scientist and “quantoid”. And that led me to go back to some of the pioneers like Richardson and Wright, who were already telling us that you can't learn much about war and peace by just studying tidbits of history, and you shouldn't use highly “poetic” generalizations. You needed to measure. You need to quantify. You needed to scale. And you needed to find correlations.

You needed to know what goes with what. Could you deconstruct? And I felt that the peace studies folks were just as willing as the hawks to take folklore, conventional wisdom, and their own intuitive, poetic take on the lessons of history.

Interviewer: Yes.

J. David Singer: So it was an intellectual transition that had already been preceded by my normative transition, which is leaving the Navy, getting up to my ears in the World Federalists, which I consider to be probably the most responsible of all the many peace groups. But we collaborated with the Fellowship of Reconciliation... There were a number of peace groups, but I, honestly, was not yet ready to make the final plunge because with the outbreak of the war in Korea, and myself being an active duty reserve officer, I had very little hesitation volunteering, which I did.

And I must confess, I didn't volunteer solely because I wanted to see the United Nations supported and vindicated. I was at a dead end, professionally. I was in a career I had no interest in. And I might even confess that I was involved with a lovely young woman who was very eager to marry - and I was not eager to marry.

Interviewer: Okay.

J. David Singer: And I have to say that, when I made that decision... my dad was, of course, quite positive. My dad had been in the Army in World War I, and also had not seen any combat. If I can really go back to Pearl Harbor Day in 1941, my mother was very distraught. And so it was a big day in my life because my mother was quite excited. My little brother thought it was great. And my dad, who had worked for the Japanese - he helped build their World Fair Pavilion in - I think it was 1936 or 7.

And he said, "I know these Japanese guys, and they're not very aggressive, and we'll beat them in six months."

And of course, a year later, I had signed on. And a few months after that, I was in training. So there was that. But in any event, I was more than willing to go back into the Navy for another two years. And of course, those two years were very important for my changing careers because by having this run-in with the commanding officer, committing a quasi-treasonable act, ending up at the Naval Officers Training School. And I remember that as a college boy, one of my professors, John Hallowell, often said to me, "David, you should go into teaching. You love political science." He was a political philosopher, and I probably had two or even three courses with him, even while I was preparing to become a gunnery officer.

And he and I actually stayed in good touch after I graduated and after I came out of the Navy because I was a traveling salesman for the Southern territory. And John was, then, a professor at Duke, where I'd done my undergraduate [degree]. So it was kind of in the back of my mind, but I was not serious. But then, the fact that I'd finished my MA at night school before the Korean War and had this new experience as a very successful teacher. As a matter of fact, the first article I ever published was on a mockup that I designed and built at the Officer's Candidate School to teach young officers what the technology of fueling at sea was. Tankers would come out and meet combat ships. And we'd sail alongside, and we'd set up all kinds of complicated hoses –

Interviewer: I remember seeing pictures of that.

J. David Singer: Well, that was my mockup. And hundreds of naval officers learned to do it there. So at any rate, leaving the Navy the second time – by then, I was pretty close to moving in a more pacificistic direction. Subsequently, I've classified myself as a 90 percent pacifist, which means on rare occasions, history deals you a bad hand, and you're not intelligent or capable enough to –

Interviewer: Do anything about it.

J. David Singer: So you go to war !

Interviewer: Yes

J. David Singer: But since I've been teaching a course on war every semester of my whole career, and we get to this question inevitably, I will always say that I conclude, no war in the last few centuries was inevitable. Every war, international or domestic, could have been avoided,

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which is why I've always had strong regard for the peace studies folks and conflict resolution folks.

I didn't think that the quality of research was good enough, but there was a lot of creativity, a lot of good ideas. And let's say, a charismatic leadership – John Burton being one, Herb Kelman being another – these were people, going back to the earlier folks like Sirokin...

Interviewer: You've talked about Lewis Richardson, Quincy Wright, Sirokin and later on, people like Herb and John Burton. Who else do you think was...a major influence on the way you think about peace research and conflict resolution? And I guess there's a second question on that. Who do you think were important figures in the field, apart from the ones who had a major influence on you? So, a two-part question.

J. David Singer: Well, I guess in terms of people who had influence on me, beyond Wright, Richardson, LeBlanc and Sorokin. Then, there was some of the 18th and 19th century philosophers, Condorcet, Ketterley, Buckle. These are all people that I began to read after Richardson and Wright really peaked my attention. There were probably a few people who influenced my approach to research.

Perhaps, Karl W. Deutsch would have been one of the most powerful, not only because he was a brilliant fellow and very, very sympathetic and supportive for the research I was doing, but we had an odd arrangement in which Jim Miller, who was the director of the Mental Health Research Institute, had met and been very taken by Karl Deutsch, and he asked me to negotiate an arrangement whereby Karl would come to the Mental Health Research Institute every month for three or four days.

That deal went on for, I don't know, I'd say five years, maybe, which then I was spending a lot of time with Karl Deutsch, learning a lot from him, being provoked by him. He was a very, very assertive, very supportive, but a tremendous command not only of history, but a tremendous command of things as exotic. For example, one of his favorite colleagues was Norbert Wiener, the founder of Cybernetics, and at the same time, the associate director of our institute was a physicist named John Platt.

John Platt was an absolutely marvelous guy. He was what I guess today we'd call a polymath, in the sense of a tremendous range of interests and enthusiasms. Started out in the physics of color and but was very interested in the philosophy of science. As a matter of fact, he wrote a paper that was very influential in my early research career. It was called *Strong Inference*, in which his

argument was: Never do an experiment, or an empirical study, unless you think it can change the dominant paradigm of the moment - which is a very tough standard.

What [Thomas] Kuhn called "normal science" is very rarely done that way. Normal science is - you stay with the dominant paradigm and you move ahead by small steps. And I've always been on the cusp between these two orientations. And as enthusiastic as I was with the fantasy that my kind of project might produce the big breakthrough, it certainly has not yet - and probably won't for a while. But I'm at the point now - having officially retired - I'm at the point where I'm wanting to step away from all of the normal science I've been doing. I must say, I inevitably have to go to normal science because there were just so many gaps.

There haven't been any of the brush clearing research that would premise - we didn't have any solid foundation. And when I say solid foundation, it had to be not only in terms of the historical evidence. It had to be in terms of the social science knowledge - and even genetics. As a matter of fact, it's really only the last few years that I've read enough in, let's call it "evolutionary biology" and "evolutionary psychology", to be quite convinced that, while humans are wired for war, we are soft-wired for war, which is a way of saying that it's never going to take much to mobilize most people, in most countries, for war.

They need to mobilize. Sure, there's some people for whom war is inherently attractive, and there's kind of a bad joke in our business. Men like war, and girls like men who like war. And certainly, in America in 1941, boy, that was so close to the truth! As a matter of fact, boys my age - if we had any interest in women, we had better be in uniform, or close to it, and those were "good days" in a lot of ways. And I say now, as a conditional, 90 percent pacifist, that I don't regret my Navy experiences because not only was there the prestige and excitement, but the opportunity.

I mean, the amount of responsibility I had when I was 20 years old - I mean, running a battleship almost all by yourself for four hours while you're on lunch is bit of a kick, a bit of a high. So there is that. I guess I would say, though, that today I realize how readily mobilized we are, and we've got tremendous experience on that, and it's because most humans have - and this I would say is an innate result of both cultural and genetic evolution - we like hierarchy, we like pecking orders.

Not that most of us want to be at the top, but most of us want to know where we are, and that is a very alarming, human, natural predisposition - for most of us. Some people would carry it further



and say we like to be regimented. I don't think that's [right] – the evidence doesn't point to that - but we sure like to know where we stand. And let me put in a pitch for a recent book written by Steve Peterson and Albert Somit, and it is called – if I can reach for it – nope I can't. It's not here right now, but it's a very interesting and, to me, persuasive book.

In it, Somit and Peterson are advancing [our knowledge] of expanding democracies in the Third World, and they think that democratic nation building is going against the grain, and they point out that democracies can get established and thrive only when certain, very special, conditions are present. And they summarize a lot of the genetic evidence, which I largely share. I was even asked to write a blurb for their dust cover, which I happily did.

Most people who are enthusiastic for democracy don't realize why most democracies are short lived, and all democracies are highly imperfect. And you look at America today, the political leadership, by and large, are not people who share the democratic norm. They are not big on *liberte*, *egalite* and *fraternite*. These are highly manipulative people, who in other times and place would've been the courtesans, the comedians.

As a matter of fact, reminds me, I used to – when I was fighting in military strategy with the guys from [the national security world] I used to call them the “Court Astrologers”, because I thought that their research was so bad and their normative assumptions were so menacing. And certainly, of course, these guys had a lot more clout than lads like myself. You can imagine how little, let's say, standing ovation and prolong applause I would get at these meetings that dealt with national security.

I have this ironic recollection that a lot of conferences – we would be seated alphabetically, and that put me between Tom Schelling and Ed Seller [sp ?], alphabetically, which was kind of painful. I mean, I never even got a chance to exchange other than pleasantries. Schelling and I spent a lot of time together over the years. We quarreled a lot. And you may remember, he was pretty deeply involved in the early days of conflict resolution. He published a couple of articles.

Interviewer: And he wrote *The Strategy of Conflict*.

J. David Singer: He wrote *The Strategy of Conflict*. That's exactly right. Now, I thought both of these were really poor books. As a matter of fact, when the second one came out, the editors at *World Politics* asked

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me to review it, and I said let me read it first. I read enough of it and said, "I don't want to ruin a beautiful friendship," because I just thought the book was scandalously off.

And, remember, Tom has always an enthusiast for game theory, which I would like to say is like kindergarten psychology. And then, of course, he used a lot of psychological analogies from interpersonal conflict, and it's very clear that he has not studied with a psychologist to know about interpersonal [or] inter-group psychology. And I claim I'm not a professional, but I used to be the psychology editor of this progenitor journal, *Background* on world politics - you may remember that.

Interviewer: Oh, I remember that. It was morphed into *International Studies* –

J. David Singer: Exactly ! You're memory is superb because that goes back, I think, 26 years.

Interviewer: That's a long time ago..

J. David Singer: So, on your question of the difference peace studies and peace science, I was committed... and we've got to do it the hard science way. And I still am – you can see... I have not budged an inch, and yet, I spend a lot of time listening to and reading the fellows whom, we "hard science" guys – we'd say their research is squishy, or soft, but it's full of good ideas. And as a matter of fact, I was talking about this new four-volume encyclopedia that [inaudible] has edited, a lot of interesting ideas in there, but nothing that constitutes scientific evidence – evidence that I would call sufficiently reproducible.

Interviewer: The field when it started... whether we're going to call it peace research or conflict research or whatever – started out with the idea of becoming a social science, and I think it started [with] two things. One, it aspired to be social science and it aspired to be practical. Let's leave the practical aside for the moment. How far do you think its come in its objective of becoming a social science? Are we anywhere near that now?

J. David Singer: Yes we are. Two anecdotes. First of all, the way you juxtaposed these is very nice because it eliminates the tension between applicability of a research enterprise and its scientific quality. In that connection, in the early days, both at *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* and more explicitly in... *The Journal of Peace Research*, we expected our authors in the conclusion to their

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papers to say: “Here’s the policy relevance.” Both journals have fallen away from that. And as a matter of fact, [at] the annual meetings of the *Peace Science Society*, by and large, we don’t spend much time wrestling with the applicability of our research findings.

Now, as to the more general question, today it *is* scientific. That is, if you read the journals, particularly the two journals of conflict resolution and peace research, and *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, and probably *International Interactions*, - *International Studies Quarterly* fluctuates more. There was a time when our crowd really dominated that journal, but I think that’s changing, I think we are being edged out a little bit, and the next presidents of the International Studies Association will not be people like myself. They’ll be people who are more, let’s say, on the bridge between peace studies and peace science.

But, there’s no question that, right now, there are lots of people – I would say more than 300 people around the world, graduate students and professors - who are doing what I would consider to be rigorous scientific research on international conflict in war and peace, and that’s good. But to use the tension that you’ve alluded to, we have won the epistemological battle, despite the realist school, the constructivists, the postmodernists and the other French philosophers, but we have not won the *applicability* struggle by a long shot.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

J. David Singer: To do good scientific research takes a tremendous amount of time, energy, attention to detail, attention to the canons of scientific method. And by the time a young scientist has crafted and published a paper like that, see - it doesn’t happen to me very often anymore, though I must say last year I did have an article rejected by *World Politics* by peace folks. It was a quantitative study trying to explain how nuclear weapons proliferation occurred, and the three referees just didn’t like all those numbers.

Also, I gathered from what the referees said, I didn’t spend enough time genuflecting in front of the many... papers those chaps had written. I’ve since revised the paper, I’ve tried to respond to the criticism, and I have a co-author, a young Japanese fellow named [inaudible], and about a month ago I submitted it to the *Journal of Politics*, which is a very quantitative journal, but doesn’t publish much stuff in international politics, it’s mostly... been an “Americanist” journal. But I did mention many years ago I did publish a few papers there...

Another reason is a lot of people - at least in America, probably in the West - say, "If you're so committed to these policy issues, and you're so normative, how can I take your science seriously?" And I can still remember a visit to London when you were there, and a bunch of British students cornered me and said, "Look, you're taking money from the US National Science Foundation, you're obviously not going to be doing objective science." Then, another group - most of these are radical students - would say, "How can you be doing objective science if you're so committed?" And then, of course, in more conservative political circles in America, that question's been thrown at me many, many times.

About two or three years ago, I gave some lectures down at the University of Virginia, which - you know- is not a hotbed of radical social science, you would agree? And the question, I was there to talk about the democratic peace, about which I'm very, very skeptical. I think what we've got there is a historical and geographical artifact. I still think that. And Mel Small and I published - way back in 1976 - a paper, and we were the first ones to statistically demonstrate that democracies very rarely went to war against one another, but we yawned and said, it's not surprising.

The last 200 years, we haven't seen that many democracies, and as a matter of fact, there haven't been [many] geographically contiguous. And contiguity, despite all the changes in technology, is still almost a necessary condition for war. So, I think those [factors] are at work, but you see people who are - and let's say doing peace research, scientific peace research - are also in traditional social science departments, typically political science, psychology, economics, sociology, occasionally anthropology. And in order to make it in their disciplines, they've got to produce papers and books that command the conventional dominant views in their disciplines - and some of us get away with murder !

Matter of fact - funny story - about five years ago one of my colleagues, who does very fancy quantitative work, had just gotten another prize. And I ran into the hall after the meeting, and I commented. I said, "Bob, what am I doing wrong?" And with the greatest straight face, he said, "Dave, you don't publish in the right journals," by which he meant the flagship journals in American political science. I've only published...

In my early days, I published maybe ten articles in the *American Political Science Review*. I don't think I've published there in 15 or 20 years. Publishing in *Conflict Resolution*, *Peace Research*, *ISQ*, *Conflict Management* - that doesn't get you

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brownie points, but happily in the American academic game, you can get brownie points and get away with murder, doing a number of other things.

One of them is to educate and mentor graduate students who go out and make a splash. Man, I've been very lucky in that regard. So many of my students, going way back into the mid-60's – I have been so successful – most of them doing peace research, but doing also enough conventional stuff to get noticed, to get published, to get tenure, to sell successful textbooks, and so forth. But, it's an interesting ball game and it's a balancing game...

For example, I mentioned this new collection by Evangelista. Now, he's at Cornell. Cornell political science, traditionally, has been very anti-scientific, and yet I recently read, oh less than a year ago, an excellent study on nuclear proliferation by a young man who is at Cornell. He's untenured. His name is Christian **Way** [sp?] I thought his paper was so good that I proposed that we get together at, I guess, the last political science meetings, and we did.

We had lunch together, and I said some - , no, he probably said, "Aren't you puzzled? What's a guy like myself doing at Cornell?" I said, "I really am. That's my first question." And he said, "Well, if you're publishing in the conventional journals, and you're doing well in the classroom – and this is very important – the conventional wisdom is the American social scientist don't care about teaching, and I've never seen that to be true." I mean, it's certainly true - there is no department that I've ever known that didn't have lazy bones and deadwood.

And - matter of fact - at the last meeting of the Political Science Association, there was a rather distinguished senior professor from the University of Washington, out on the West Coast. His paper was dismal, and as he was rattling on, I'm thinking, "Boy I wouldn't let that guy in a classroom of mine." He may have been better in his youth. Matter of fact, I knew him in his youth, and I think he was. But this was just – this paper was so bad scientifically and so bad in a literary sense. So yes, it's a balancing act.

And because I've been a very successful teacher, and that's measured by the number of PhD's that you turn out. It's measured by the number of people who had to get on wait list to take your undergraduate courses. It's measured by the kind of evaluations that your students write.

And as a matter of fact, [I'm] in the midst of a very pleasant, but irritating, experience. I'm teaching a course in the School of Natural Resources called "War and the Environment", which is something I've been doing for two years now. It's always been a

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little bit of a sideline of mine – environmentalism - and I was told I could not set up a prerequisite for the course.

So that meant, first come, first serve, and at the end of the first day, not only had the 20 spaces been taken up, but 17 had been taken up by political science [students]. There was only room for three natural resource students. So what I've had to do is retroactively say nobody's going be finally admitted until I've read two writing samples and your transcripts.

Interviewer: Well, it's making [more work] for your own back !

J. David Singer: That's right...we used to do that in the "World Politics" program in political science, but my colleagues complained. They said "It's a lot of trouble !" And I say, "Yeah, but think how much more trouble it is when the semester starts and you've got half a dozen real turkeys in there," - which you always have. There is no university that is not going to admit students who have no business being in any university - no less Michigan [University].

So, I do this now. I never give a course in political science without reading two writing samples, transcript, or having had them in a previous course. And it makes teaching such a pleasure, you don't spend a lot of time doing remedial stuff.

Interviewer: Let me go back to something else that you said about you being at the center of this tension between... practice and being scientific and being wanting to be rigorous and quantitative yet wanting to be innovative and exploratory. To some extent, I think your career has been an example [of being] between those two things.

J. David Singer: That's not as tough as being policy relevant.

Interviewer: No. I think that's right, and... the thing that's always struck me about your career is that you've always tried to be policy relevant, you've always talked to people, you've always tried to look at their ideas, present some alternatives. In spite of all these tensions, the field - whether we're going to call it "peace research" or... "conflict resolution - has become enormously successful over the last couple of decades. I mean it's grown hugely.

How do you think, going back to the early days, how do you think this came about? Why do you think this is so successful? Why do you think the ideas of some of the early people have resulted in this huge explosion of places, people, etcetera, etcetera, - looking back? Do you think this is what people envisioned in the '50s and '60s? Do you think the field has become what the early

pioneers, the “parents” envisioned - or has it fallen short in some way?

J. David Singer: No. Chris, let me start by saying, I think you’re absolutely correct when you say it has really blossomed and burgeoned. And I say that with very mixed feelings because I really consider that a very large fraction of that stuff is nothing that hasn’t been said over and over again. As a matter of fact, I remember one anecdote that popped in to my head. There was a workshop of the US Institute of Peace, and a very famous labor mediator - no longer alive - was holding forth [on] the requirements of a successful labor conflict resolution man, and he was talking about all the things you needed, and then he said something about, you needed a good bladder so you could sit at these long, drawn out negotiation.

And I said, "You also needed a very visible belly button because that’s where you got most of your information," because I was very contemptuous. What I heard him say was what you get from “Dear Abby”, and I have to say that some of my early graduate students, particularly the ones that were not in political science but were in social or psych actually have become major actors in this, what I would call, softer conflict resolution field. The only name I can think of off that is Clint Fink, but there’s a young, very bright young Canadian guy whom I’m sure you know, short fellow with a very neat beard.

Interviewer: Oh, yes.

J. David Singer: Exactly. And both these guys were good students of mine, I used to give a graduate seminar called World Politics and the Related Disciplines, which the department decided was too much of a boutique course, and required me to drop it. But a lot of this stuff, you pick it up, and by the time you’re in the second paragraph, you know [that] you’ve been there many times. And worse yet, you know these people have been dealing with very fuzzy concepts, if you will - bottles with lots of holes in them, or carrying ideas in a sieve. No sense of reproducibility.

So in a way, the early founders were already in two schools. There was the crowd that was sitting there in Palo Alto in about 1955 with Anatol Rapaport and Ken Boulding and...Dean Pruitt and, I believe, Herb Kelman. I’m not sure about that right now. I’m checking these names out, but then there were your mentor, John Burton, I suppose even. It’s kind of interesting. At least Boulding, I think, was much more in that camp.



And of course, Kenneth, himself, is the most charming and attractive blend of the two because Ken was very charismatic, creative. He was a poet. He didn't just write limericks, which he always wrote at the end of any kind of conference. Ken would come up with a charming limerick that would capture what we'd done, or make fun of what we'd done. But you know, he stopped... doing quantitative work many years ago, even though he started out as a very competent, and highly regarded, slightly unconventional economist. Then, we had – here at the University of Michigan - we had something called the Residential College, and one of the founders of that was Ted Newcomb, the social psychologist.

And, as I recall, Ted may have even been at the Palo Alto group, where the consensus there, I would say, was very strong. I was not there. And I had a strong sense that what these men were saying was, "We're going to study the problem of war and peace, but we're not going to do it in a soft, squishy, poetic way, we're going to study it like hard scientists.

And that certainly emerged when they decided to start the center. They needed to have a center and they thought Michigan was a good place and Michigan had two very attractive things going for it. It was already a social science University, and I like to say, the President (whose name I'm not even remembering now) was... an English and American literary figure, his most famous research is on the literature of the Great Lakes, but he ran a very relaxed, loose ship.

He was a great believer in an administration that was flexible and impermanent, so we had almost no trouble, despite the resistance. There was no administrative trouble about creating yet another center. Michigan already had a bunch of centers in its institutes, and to this day, Michigan is just a-swim in these institutes and centers. Some of them silly, some new, some ossified, most of them pretty good.

We have now an institute of, I think it's called the "International Institute" which I don't like at all. I mean, some of my best friends work over there because it's very prescientific, except that now... they have an escape hatch ! They do survey research, and if you ask people questions, no matter how irrelevant the responses, and you quantify that, these guys have become scientists. And at Michigan, for me to say this is slightly dangerous - but I got away with it. You know: "...He's an old man, he's made his mark, we'll let him get away with these crudities...". But since my department is probably more than one-

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third survey research, opinion studies folks, I'm really a weak minority.

But I do not encourage our best students to go that direction. I tell them that this research is not going to be durable. Its sources of error are misleading, and beside, if you're trying to understand how a political system works, there are many more important variables than what this particular age or ethnic cohort had to believe.

So, I think most of the "founding fathers" split off early on. And as you know ... I even think of a young Englishman like Paul Smoker. When I first met him, I was teaching in Norway. He came to a conference. He had freshly graduated with a degree in physics, and I was very taken with him, I thought, "Boy, to see a youngster with this kind of idealism, energy, intelligence, and [sophistication]..." And I've always... probably, with some regret, encouraged people out of math, physics and engineering to go in to peace research, and some of those people have turned out very well - but not very many.

If I can, for example, mention one of my favorite younger guys, Hayward Alker. Hayward did his undergraduate [degree] - I think it was in physics. Then he went into political science, was a student of Karl Deutsch at Yale, wrote a very good dissertation, wrote a terrific article for my first book, *Quantitative International Politics*, but it wasn't long before he was moving away... certainly from mainstream science, to much more constructive stuff, and I'd say that I don't have much regard for anything he's done in many years, and you can put this on the tape if you care !

I would say it's kind of interesting. Out of that program, Karl Deutsch had a cohort of young PhD's who finished about the same time. One of them was Bruce Russett, who is the man to whom I gave the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* when the Michigan people got rid of it; and they wanted - parenthetically, they wanted to send it to Texas where it would have been in the hands of three very non-empirical, non-historical people. I remember coming back from a sabbatical in Europe, finding this out, and I just hit the ceiling, and I was able to persuade the Dean to revoke the contract they had made with Texas and with a publisher. And the Dean said to me, "Sir, you've got 30 days to solve this and - "

Interviewer: And you persuaded Bruce -

J. David Singer: I had no trouble persuading Bruce, and he and I decided to go to Sage Publishing. Then, it was run by a very gifted, personable woman named Sara Miller, and we had a contract pretty close to

30 days, and Bruce has now edited that journal for about 28, 29 years, and done a splendid job. His plans, now that he's about to step down because he's ten years younger than I am – but he's on the cusp of retirement... and the last time I asked him he said, "You'll find out, you're just another member of the Board of Editors. There's no reason for you to know any of these secrets." But since I'm really one of the founding fathers of the *Journal*, and I'm certainly the man who saved it from oblivion because now it would have been God knows what kind of journal. But there's still this marvelous tension, and I already regret it because so much of the peace research, conflict resolution [journals] are not particularly original, and not at all rigorous.

So the work is not cumulative, whereas the stuff that is presented in *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, or more seriously, the papers that are presented at the Peace Science meetings, by and large [are]. You know, if there are 50 papers presented, then 30 or 40 of them meet all of the cannons of scientific method. That's good news. Even though some of it is pretty trivial, and there's certainly...mistruth, but not only are some of them not politically relevant, but some of it is theoretically trivial.

And of course, we all have our biases, I am very skeptical about game theory. I'm very skeptical about complex systems, so far, and since you and I both go back to the days of the general systems movement, we saw how that fizzled out –

Interviewer: Did it not !

J. David Singer: Did it not ! So the question, I guess, is where are we now? If you want to ask that question.

Interviewer: Well, actually, that was almost my next question, which is not just where are we now, but where are we going to go? Where do you think the field is going to go from now on?... Where would you like to see it go?

J. David Singer: Well, those are certainly two separate questions. In the book that I'm writing, which is large – it's an autobiography, but it's a history of peace research, peace science movement, heavily focused around my Correlates of War project. Where it's likely to go is, I'm afraid, there's going to be increasing interest in some of these more esoteric epistemologies, like complex systems, like agent-based modeling, which I'm afraid is going to be less and less

historically and empirically based. That's not all bad, but it depends on what the mix is.

I mean, I'm delighted to be in the Department that has a couple of people like that, or people who do a lot of formal mathematical modeling. I think, in due course, that skill will become important, but it will only become important when the empirical, inductive work has been done better and more fully. I discourage my students from investing too heavily in mathematics. I encourage them to invest heavily in basic elementary statistics.

As a matter of fact, I have a very strong complaint about contemporary social science statistics. Too many scholars are trying to come up with models that explain everything at once. They've got ten explanatory variables plus the kitchen sink, and furthermore, they now take very seriously the statistical significance of the correlation coefficients. And any good statistician knows there are 100 ways to manipulate, so you can get any kind of statistical significance you want, almost by order, largely just by artificially increasing the number of cases in your study.

So, I don't like that much. Then... I'm not very happy with another trend, probably exemplified by the phrase "process tracing", which I think is a very pretentious phrase, I think it's coined by Alexander George, who recently retired from Stanford, - but I've been, in a sense, arm wrestling with Alex for years and years because, before he became a college professor, he was at the Rand Corporation, where he picked up a lot of bad habits, none of which have much to do with good science.

So as a matter of fact, Alex likes to talk about his research method of structured, focused comparisons, which is a somewhat pretentious way: "Well, we do case studies, but we do them in a more rigorous way." Well, I don't think they're particularly rigorous. If you use different variables in each case study, you're ... you're losing comparison right away, and if you don't have operational measurement, you don't know if you're talking about a little or a lot, or more or less.

So when my students come to be upper grad students - now, by and large [they] know better, but undergraduates are attracted because, see most undergraduates who are majoring in, let's say political science, don't have any exposure to scientific methods. It comes late, if at all. I'm probably the only one, even now at this late date, who brings scientific method into his undergraduate classes. Now, the trend is there, and I have at Michigan... several colleagues who are doing that, and I think that's absolutely

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essential. The idea that college is nothing but high school repeated, I find appalling - and there's a lot of it.

Interviewer: Is it going that way?

J. David Singer: Well, a lot of my colleagues are going that way. We suffer now from "constructivism", which has two forms. The sane, moderate form is; "Perceptions and preferences and predictions matter." I have no trouble with that. It's when those are the only things that matter, or as the late Dick Snyder once said, everything is a matter of perception. He comes close to the extremists who say, there is no "there" out there, there is no social reality. All of social reality is social construct. Now that's pretty crazy.

It takes a very good insight and blows it up into utter insanity, and our friends from Paris are really the major offenders - our friends from Paris and Brussels... The other disease we suffer from is audio/visual technology. I think this is very destructive.

Interviewer: What ? Explain?

J. David Singer: Nobody gives a lecture anymore - hardly anybody - without using PowerPoint. So here, I mean, our colleagues are less and less capable of speaking paragraphs if they can't read it off the damn screen, and I have a colleague who's a very bright guy who - I've seen him now, several times - stands with his back to the audience. He reads off the screen what he's already put on his little PowerPoint gadget. And first of all, it moves at a very slow pace, but it means that we're encouraging American college kids... I think it's already happening in Western Europe, as the technology becomes cheaper and more available.

They don't learn the hard way. They don't learn by thinking. They get all kinds of audiovisuals. As a matter of fact - a very vulgar version of this - the New York Times magazine now has a funny section. I don't know if you've seen that. I just skip right through it. As a matter of fact, the artwork that now accompanies a lot of what used to be serious journals and magazines, is now utterly foolish, and also, you don't write a textbook anymore without sidebars.

I recently reviewed a book that I thought was very, very good called *The Dynamics of International Relations* by Walter Clemens, and in my blurb that's on the back cover I say, 'Even the sidebars are informative', which is my way of saying; "This is crazy ! A journal that I read a lot - well, it's not really a journal, it's a magazine - *Psychology Today*. It's now impossible to read.

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You have to flip the pages back and forth, you never know which story ends where, and there are now even magazines, including your [inaudible] magazine that starts its last article on the last page and finishes at earlier pages, so you don't even know from front to back anymore.

And I ... will not sign a contract with a publisher who wants me to have sidebars. I don't mind graphics, and I might even not mind an artistic front piece. Occasionally it can be informative. But most of this stuff is junk. It's like eating candy, and... in my teaching I do not use any transparencies. I don't even own a PowerPoint, and I say we should be able to get across our most complicated ideas - and many of them *are* complicated - using the mother tongue. Throw in a little German and French if you need to. There are certain words that we don't do well in English, but -

Interviewer: All right, but ... there must be some positive things that you think are going to happen to the field. What do you think, looking at the field... with the benefit of having watched it develop, since -

J. David Singer: From the beginning.

Interviewer: What do you see that is positive - anything?

J. David Singer: Yes. Every year, when I come home from the Peace Science meeting, I'm optimistic about our epistemological track, and that is, there is a very strong commitment to scientific method - in its various guises, mind you - and the number of people who are following more scientific method is growing pretty fast. As a matter of fact... I remember, I was talking to one of my students yesterday [who] just did excellent work as an undergrad. He now wants to go to graduate school in world politics, and one of the schools we talked about applying to is Harvard, and he says, "There was a time when I just heard you badmouth Harvard." I said, "That's right."

But in the last six, seven years, they hired a guy by the name Gary King, who is absolutely brilliant - very versatile, methodologically. I'd say compellingly good. And since then, they've hired some younger people who are very scientific. So, I told Andrew, "Yeah. You should apply to Harvard." He's got a grade point average of about 3.85 out of 4.0, and his papers from me...

...Two weeks ago, I gave some lectures at SUNY, State University of New York Binghamton, and that's never been a very highly regarded place, but Stuart Bremer, who's a very important

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man in this history of the peace science movement (worked with me for many years) began to turn the program around and Binghamton - probably 13, 14 years ago, maybe. Then he moved from there to Penn State, which had never been famous as a Political Science department. It was very cutting edge methodologically and I would say Bremer deserves... he's no longer alive, he died about ... I'm sorry to say... I think the year 2002.

Interviewer: He was quite young, wasn't he?

J. David Singer: He was. Yes. He died of cancer - and he had not just lung cancer; He was a heavy smoker, but his cancer had spread throughout his body, and he had a pretty miserable last couple of years. But he was not only a very good scientist, but he was very charismatic. I would always like to say Stuart was never a man who [had] charming manners, but he was very captivating and students really gravitated toward him and learned what he had to teach them, which was a lot. And incidentally, he was heavily influenced by - I'm blocking on the name - a colleague of mine at Michigan State University, who called me one day [must have been in the very early '70s] and said, "Dave, I've got a young man here, very unconventional. He's brilliant. I want you to take a look at him," and I said, "Fine." I had Stuart Bremer telephone me, we talked on the phone 15, 20 minutes. I asked him if he'd like to come down and meet me. He said sure. He drove down. We spent a very good afternoon together; I then consulted with my colleagues, and they agreed we could bring him down and give a job talk. He gave a job talk. Enough of us thought it was great. We made him an offer, and he came here.

Now, he was unconventional. He was very mathematical. His dissertation was a computer simulation of the global system. He did it, not at Michigan State but at Northwestern, under the influence of Harold Guetzkow, and Harold had a very good influence on Stuart in a lot of ways. I mean, Harold and I have certainly had our big intellectual disagreements. You may even remember the infamous article I wrote in *Behavioral Science* somewhere in the '70's, and it was called, *Data Making and International Politics*.

Interviewer: Oh, that's right. It's a critique of INS, wasn't it?

J. David Singer: That's exactly [right]; a critique on that and in praise of Robert North's project. Remember the "Conflict and Integration"



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something like that. ? Really, they called it the World War I study.

Interviewer: That's right. He was working with Nazli Choucri.

J. David Singer: Exactly. And he had some other very good students... So, I would say that, if I were to make some predictions, we will continue to see probably slow growth, or maybe even rapid growth, of people doing rigorous work, some of which will be, probably, very exciting, and important. We'll see some of it – probably - frittered away by pursuing certain scientific and scholarly chimera, and I guess, if I had to say now, I would still say, complex systems will turn out to be a chimera.

Now, you know it has attracted so many very, very smart, creative people, but having lived through the boom and bust in the general systems thing, we – I mean, the general systems movement, I think, was killed by the lack of interest in empirical work and the pretentiousness. We used the word theory when all we had was a typology, and that's happening again. The word "theory" leads a lot of people down a primrose path.

I use the word theory in a much more, constricted sense. I mean a body of knowledge, reasonably codified, inherently, logically consistent, to some extent empirically supported and to a large extent, empirically "dis-confirmable", to use the Popperian expression. I think that's not going to go anyplace, and I find that our grad students here, who are attracted to that, seem incapable of telling anybody what the hell they're doing. They don't have variables.

Interviewer: I had that feeling about the... ending of the general systems movement.

J. David Singer: That's right. You may remember reading David Easton in your youth, and David – what a delightful, bright charming guy. He's still alive, he's retired, but he's still teaching part-time out at [UC] Irvine, but I like to say that David's concepts had no empirical content. They were roles. They were relationships, but there were no human critters in them.

Interviewer: Well... he's still alive, is he?

J. David Singer: Yes. The last I heard.

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Interviewer: Because I had a student who used at least a framework of his to do a dissertation, and I thought it would be very nice to... send a copy of the dissertation... Then I thought, I have no idea whether David is still around. I guess he must be quite old.

J. David Singer: He's got to be in his late 80's, yes. But you know, mentioning David Easton, thereby [hangs an] interesting [story]... He was in the general systems group at Chicago when Ray Wagoneer,[sp?] the Chairman of Psychiatry at Michigan, negotiated with Jim Miller a deal. The Psychiatry Department – it was losing its accreditation because the members were not publishing enough, whereas the people in the general systems group at Chicago were certainly very productive.

The political scientist in that group was David Easton. The historian was Bob Crane. The sociologist was Dick Meyer, the biologist was Ralph Gerard, and I guess one of the physicists was John Platt. There's a very powerful bunch. Ray raised the money to bring the whole team to Michigan en mass...

Interviewer: My goodness, how much did that cost?

J. David Singer: I don't know, but it was plenty. Now Jim had a couple of "angels". One of our angels was the son of the McCormick reaper family. I can't remember McCormick's first name, but he was a marvelous fellow. He was a fan of Union psychiatry, but then I remember, he put on a lot of interesting conferences. One day – not one day, one week - he had all of us out at Palm Springs, which must have cost a mint. It was a great conference. Not only the Michigan crowd, but I remember a very gifted psychologist from MIT, and a very gifted mathematician named Meryl Fledge, who was in and out of the Mental Health Research Institute.

But Jim Pollock did not want to give Dave Easton a joint appointment in Political Science. So Dave said, "I'm not going to go if I don't have an appointment in political science, as well as mental health research," which was about the same time that Crane [Brinton], the historian, was on a panel with me and he said, "Young man, I want to see whether you'd be happy at the Mental Health Research Institute," so he went to Jim Miller. And Jim Miller said, "Send the young man over. Have him give a job talk."

I gave a talk on a general systems taxonomy for political science, which I subsequently published. It's... one of these papers that still reappears. Well, Miller and the others liked what I said, and a few days later he offered me a job -, which was quite remarkable - at twice what I'd been making teaching. A 12-month

job. As I remember, it was about \$12,000.00, and I was making about \$6,000.00 teaching in political science. So we discussed two things. I said, "I've got this offer from the Naval War College, and I don't want to back out of it, and he said, "That's all right. Come back in six months."

And then, I said, "You're offering a very handsome salary, I have not yet done the kind of research I talk about. I think I can do it, but I'm not sure, and I don't think you should pay me this handsomely until I've demonstrated." He said, "Sure," and then, he cut it back to – I don't know – \$9,000.00. That cost me millions of dollars over my career. He never once said, "It's time to demonstrate that you deserve a real medical school faculty salary," so it cost me a lot of money. But let's say: "No good deed goes unpunished", and this was a very costly one.

Interviewer: Yes. It was a good, but foolish, deed, if I may say.

J. David Singer: On the other hand, I've gone through my career with a clear conscience. Only once in my life have I negotiated for an offer that I had no intention of taking. As a matter of fact, I think I've only [once] negotiated for an offer anyway. I mean, I've had a number of, as you imagine, a number of nice feelers, but I've always decided against them. For example, the Princeton boys seemed interested in recruiting me, but my wife and I went out and spent three, four days there. As we got on the train to come back home, we looked at one another. We both shook our heads and said: "No. What a precocious bunch of kids !"

Interviewer: Well, you've been here ever since I can remember...

J. David Singer: Since '58, so it's 47 years. And I won't say it's been an easy ride. It's been one hell of a ride. You know, I've been fired twice. They tried to fire me a third time, and a bunch of the boys in political science circulated a petition, calling for my dismissal on grounds of professional incompetence. It was okay, the petition said, "...for poets and botanists not to know the nature of the Soviet threat, but for a political scientist it's unforgivable. Therefore ..." and the chairman told these guys to go to hell, - which I thought was pretty gutsy.

Interviewer: Good for him.

J. David Singer: I'm pretty sure the chairman was Sam Elders. He was one of my heroes. Sam is 89, about, still alive, but on his last legs. He's been

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very ill. He's in the hospital right now, but he's the man who took this department and turned it around, from being Jim Pollock's system into [being] pretty lively. And today, it's considered one of the best two, three departments in the country.

We are very productive. We turn out a lot of pretty good Ph.D.'s. We do a lot of cutting edge stuff, some of which I think is frivolous, some of which is solid, and as you heard me say before...

Interviewer: All right. That was all stuff about what you think is going to happen. What would you like to see happen in the field, and what would your part be in it?

J. David Singer: Well, it's an interesting, open-end invitation and I will take a whack at it. I'd like to see a continuation of commitment to rigorous methodologies staying fairly close to normal science. A little more interested in a search for the breakthrough, even though I don't think it's likely in the short run.

I think it's terribly important to think big thoughts. As a matter of fact, when I was out there at Binghamton, Pat Regan put a very good question to me. And he said, "How do you reconcile, and how would you reconcile, simple models and complicated models?" And...I think it's a good lead into your question. I think that our research investigations should, by and large, be testing simple models – simpler models.

Interviewer.: Yes.

J. David Singer: Avoiding elaborate statistical elegance and avoiding methods that become increasingly hard to permit causal inference. Staying away from too much esoterica. On the other hand, I think that every one of our researchers should spend a few hours every week, thinking big, complex ideas, which is why it is important for us to read the "soft" conflict resolution people. We should read them more carefully. We should read more widely...fiction, more widely – some people get inspiration out of poetry. I don't - but I do out of fiction. And I also read a lot in contemporary magazines. I go to seminars being put on by other departments, which is another way of saying that the interdisciplinary tradition needs to be maintained and probably expanded. I say that because the interdisciplinary tradition in American universities is, on the one hand, under assault. On the other hand, there are, let's say, heroic efforts to

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resurrect it. It's under assault because traditional departments – traditional disciplinary departments – want their people to be good in that discipline.

Interviewer: Right

J. David Singer: And then, of course, the idiotic practice that began... better than 30 years ago of skipping in the American system – skipping the post-doctoral instructorship and going right to the assistant professorship. That means, as soon as the young person comes out of graduate school, somebody starts the clock on them. Five, six years, two books, and a dozen articles if you want to get tenure. This is absolutely idiotic. When I came out, you have five, six, seven years in which you were not expected to publish. You were expected to round out your inadequate education – every graduate education is grossly inadequate – and hone your teaching competence. And I had a very relaxed number of years.

Interviewer: Yes.

J. David Singer: If it hadn't been for the fact that Jim Bullock had fired me and that all of the sudden I was here, in the medical school psychiatry department, where I already had some kind of tenure, I would have had a much more hectic early career. I had a very easy career. My early papers, for some reason, clicked. I hardly got any articles rejected in my youth, which was amazing.

So that's one thing that's idiotic. We need to give scholars more time. We need to reduce the pressure on them, in terms of how much they have to publish, and we certainly need to encourage them to play around with their buddies down the hall. Now, at Michigan, there is a very concerted effort. Matter of fact, only last week, the provost put out a very good memo, announcing a new series of research grants to encourage people from different departments to collaborate.

Interviewer: Yes.

J. David Singer: But, it's a very tough row to hoe. If you're supposed to publish fast, and you're supposed to stay in your own field. As a matter of fact, I can tell you there's a phrase that's around that is really destructive. We lost, for example, a very gifted man in my department. The conventional people say, "He doesn't know what he wants to be when he grows up," which is meant to be cute, but

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it's devastating. It really says, "Don't mess around with anything outside of your ballpark."

Interviewer: Don't go outside your own field.

J. David Singer: Yes. And of course, I violated that all my life and had a lot of fun doing it, and have kind of put my thumb in my eyes of the fellows who say, "You shouldn't do it" but I've always had good relationships with historians, psychologists, anthropologists, and moderately good relationships with economists. I don't do well with them because they're a pretty pretentious bunch of guys. Very few women in economics, although I might say that my spouse is a defunct economist.

Interviewer: We used to call them "recovering".

J. David Singer: Recovering !

Interviewer: But I'll tell you, this has always been one of the great strengths of the field...its willingness to be multi-disciplined or to borrow ideas...

J. David Singer: That's right.

Interviewer: You seem to feel that this is under assault, though.

J. David Singer: Oh, yes. By the administrators and by the professors who are doing the dirty work of the administrators.

Interviewer: Yes. Is there a response? Is there something we could do...?

J. David Singer: The first thing is that those of us who teach graduate students should spend a lot more time reminding them that, even though that you are in this discipline, your outcome variables can be political or economic or what have you but, you'll never explain them adequately if you always stay in the same discipline for your explanatory variables. So you've got to get out of the box. Economists should be paying more attention to psychology ( which is happening). Political scientists should be paying more attention, which they are doing, which I think isn't bad – we should be paying more attention to psychology and anthropology, in my view. We need to know more about human nature.

Remember, the gurus of the old political science [school] - the world politics side, were basically in agreement with ignorant men

like Hans Morgenthau. Hans was a marvelous guy – very smart, knew a lot of history, but he was a middle European scholar and historian. And he really believed that human nature determines - that most human beings are primarily in pursuit of power, and therefore, states are in pursuit of power, which utterly ignores the fact that most human beings have a ludicrous streak. A lot of us have a little bit of a playful streak. Fellows, like you and I, maybe a little more than normal.

Interviewer: Oh, no !! I've always thought to myself, when you start out reading [in] *Politics among Nations*, [that] human beings are basically power-seeking people. And I'm thinking to myself, "How much time did I spend seeking power last week?" And you ask a question like that, and all sorts of question marks pop up, and you think, "Well, maybe we're not."

J. David Singer: "Maybe we're not !" is right.

Interviewer: We're not !

J. David Singer: I told you a little story about being asked to run for Congress – and the fear that I might win. It was not likely in a real Republican upstate New York District.

Interviewer: Let me go back to something we were saying earlier about influences on the field. A lot of people have established networks within the field and some networks outside the field. Which were your important networks? Which do you think were key networks for you? I mean, you've mentioned Karl Deutsch. You've mentioned historical networks with works like those of Lewis Fry Richardson and Quincy Wright. But what were important networks for you in your career, do you think?

J. David Singer: Well, I was one of the early members of a group called [the] Social Science History Association, which you haven't mentioned.

Interviewer: No.

J. David Singer: Its headquarters were largely Bowling Green University, right down the street in Ohio and I was an officer of that organization, as was Mel Small, the historian, who was my first major research assistant and first major collaborator. So I was always in pretty good touch with a group of historians. But as you asked the question, it dawned on me. I was never very big at going to conferences. I did my share of it, and I was never very big on

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organizations. I always felt that academics can fritter away a lot of their time and energy in organizations. So I belonged to the International Studies Association, which, by tradition, was interdisciplinary, but I was pretty selective. I didn't hang out with people from any particular crowd. But I liked historians, and I liked psychologists. As I mentioned earlier, I was a psychology editor for a while, on *Background* and on *World Politics*. Your mentioning Karl Deutsch is important because Karl always encouraged me to get involved with some of his cronies. And I remember this lunch, for example, with Norbert Wiener. It was – I mean, for a young scholar like myself, it was like watching a ping-pong match, because Deutsch and Wiener were two very manic, articulate, self-confident men. Very delightful ideas.

John Platt kept me in better touch with physicists. And at the Mental Health Research Institute, remember, I was the only political scientist there. Now, my closest associations were with John Black, the physicist. Dick Meyer was kind of an economist, sociologist. Bob Crane, who is an Asian historian, Anatol Rappaport, who is not only a mathematician and a biologist, but a pianist.

Matter of fact, if I can digress on this, Anatol [Rapoport] when I started the project, said something to me, very profound. He said, "Dave, if you think that you're going to come up with a coherent theory to explain war, forget it. It's too complicated, it's going to take too many man years, or scholar years." But he said, "What you're going to do in your life time – you are going to show how foolish much of the conventional wisdom about war and peace is. You are going to disconfirm a lot of the mythology," or words to that effect.

Interviewer: Yes.

J. David Singer: And I'd like to think here – and now that I'm entering my eighties, - that he was, I'm sorry to say, all too accurate. That is, we're far from a breakthrough, [but] we have dispatched a fair amount of the phony stuff. Not enough of it, however. That gets into the question over what's our link to the [policy] developments in the policy community.

Interviewer: Well, how can we improve that? Do you think we can?

J. David Singer: I think it's possible. But I think it's really spitting into the wind because it would require the policy audience in many countries to

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take social science seriously. And you don't find those fellows and girls every place. As we agreed earlier, you don't even find them in the foundations, so less in government agencies. It's kind of ironic. In the very early days of the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* and the centered mission, you would see the *Journal* on desks in the Pentagon and in the State Department. It looked like a coming fad.

Interviewer: Yes.

J. David Singer: Almost none of those subscriptions lasted more than two or three years. And I can remember - there's a young colonel who had a bizarre name. He was a major. They made him a major, and his last name was Minor. So his name was Major Minor, which almost sounded like he came out of -

Interviewer: Catch 22 ?

J. David Singer: Exactly, yes. He was very excited about computer simulation and about a lot of quantitative social science, and he had [group] going in the Pentagon for a while, but some of the academics that he brought in were such fakers - and here, I think I will not mention names, but I can tell you those, off tape.

Interviewer: OK.

J. David Singer: But a number of social scientists, who were in the peace research/peace science crowd, made some really irresponsible claims. I will paraphrase one that I heard all too often. "You give me three years and three million dollars, buster, and I'll solve that problem for you." Now, most of the guys who said that - I'm sorry to say - were Republicans, who were very good methodologists, but were also opportunists, is my ungenerous take. But there was that.

So then, a lot of the friendly people who make the American scene - the State Department had a marvelous team in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Some of those men and women were sympathetic to our kind of research. Some of them - most of them - didn't know very much about it. As a matter of fact, the chief honcho in State... was very supportive, but was just so badly educated about social science and scientific matters, generally. So that's a problem. And many of his colleagues were just brutally hostile - they thought he was just wasting resources and wasting his time. And I still remember an article written by Charles Burton Marshall, who used to teach at Johns Hopkins. And he read some

of my papers, and that led him – we were on a panel together remember – led to him to write a scathing article called, something like, *Waiting for the Curtain*. And his metaphor was that all we would ever be doing is rehearsing and proving our methods and playing around. But we wouldn't produce anything valuable. And then, I had a colleague – one of my closest colleagues here – Inis L. Claude Jr., who ended up at the University of Virginia where he was among more people with his point of view. But he used to say, "Dave, you guys, what you're doing – you're just winding up. You're never gonna pitch the ball."

Anyways, part of the sense that we were very slow in getting out of the blocks. And that's not surprising. It's not like we were building on a solid historical tradition. We were inventing methods. We were inventing a new science, if you will. And I know that I devoted – probably, the first half of my career, I would say - half of my time and energy was devoted to figuring out ways to observe and measure the variables that we thought might be important. And we published a book many years later called, *Measuring the Correlates of War*, which I edited with Paul Diehl, one of my very good students. And the book has never really caught on, which is too bad because it shows you the pioneering effort.

It shows you the tremendous amount of work that people around my project or – I'll mentioned another name who hasn't come up yet, Russell Leng. Russ was, then, an instructor, or assistant professor at Middlebury College. Had a very inadequate graduate school education - as I remember [at] American University. But he came to me one year – he was probably about five or six years out – and he said, "Professor, I've got a sabbatical coming up, and I want to work with you." And I was very pleased. We talked a bit and I could see this was a very serious, bright fellow.

But then I remember, he confessed to me that he was an admirer of the work of Tom Shelling, and I remember saying, "Russ, if you like Schelling, you're not gonna like Singer." Nevertheless, he came, spent a terrific year here. And he and I devised a typology of how to observe and measure behavioral correlates of war. Actions and behavior, not alliance configurations, not industrial capability - non-structural, but behavioral variables. So that has not gotten enough attention.

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Many times our proposals – they frequently have proposed that we start a journal in comparative international politics called *Observation and Measurement*. But there's never been much interest, and none of the disciplines give much credence. As a matter of fact, I had a chairman, Mr. **Barben Woods** – I was complaining about how badly I was being treated, which was probably unjustified. And he said, "Look, Singer, you've never made any contribution beyond generating all those data sets. Shut up and get back to work." And... that's all he knew. He didn't know anything about the fact that we had already published twelve or fifteen – all very good – articles, testing alternative theoretical models.

So coming back to the policy thing, it's a very tough nut. It's not a losing battle, but one of the pre-requisites is that the universities in the free world – I'm being a little facetious now – have got to see to it that their graduates learn something about scientific method. Furthermore – I'm being very facetious now – law schools should be abolished because they do such a terrible job. Well obviously, that's not a possibility, but it is a possibility since law schools like Michigan or like Yale have already gone interdisciplinary. We even have a political scientist and an economist teaching in the law school here.

Interviewer: It's happening.

J. David Singer: It is happening. And if lawyers, who become such an influential part of the policy elite in western countries – if these guys knew a little something about evidence – and I don't mean evidence in the legal sense, I mean evidence in the scientific sense – that would help a lot. But when you start talking to these fellows... and I have talked myself blue, keeping my security clearance. One of the reasons I did it was to have more access to these fellows, and it's frustrating as hell. You can go down to the CIA for a day's conference and explain why you didn't think this was a particularly good prediction or a particularly good analysis, and you were just blowing wind. And to this day, the mentality of, let's say, John Foster and the other [Allen] Dulles – [make it impossible to] pick that up.

Interviewer: It's alive and well.

J. David Singer: Yes. These guys are still alive and well. These guys have no idea about what scientific method looks like. And just look at the

debate about “creative design”... you’ve got to be pretty ignorant to not understand and find credible the general Darwinian model. I mean, just think of the number of Americans who profess to be churchgoers, well over 60 percent. And more than 70 percent of Americans in recent surveys believe in the hereafter. So we are living in a country that is full of very superstitious people. And therefore, they buy all kinds of snake oil, and that’s why politicians, like Bill Clinton and George Bush, get away with the kind of absent crap.

And then, you ask yourself, "How about journalists? They don't get trained to learn anything about scientific method. They go to journalism school, which should be probably the first [to be abolished]. The first school I would abolish would be public policy, and the second would be journalism. They are so dangerous to a democratic, functioning society because all it does is perpetuate all the folklore...

Interviewer: David, thank you very much. Let me ask the last question we always ask people in this particular project, which is; “Who else should we talk to – who else, among the parents of field ?”

We are going to talk to Walter [Izard]. We’ve already talked with a number of your contemporaries and colleagues. Unfortunately, we haven’t been able to get to Anatole [Rapoport].

J. David Singer: You probably won’t.

Interviewer: We won’t. Who else do you think we should talk to? Who else is important?

J. David Singer: Is Jim Rosenau on your list?

Interviewer: He’s not, but-

J. David Singer: He’d be worth talking to because he’s got a perspective very different from mine. He’s much more sympathetic to the conflict resolution stuff. I accused him of jumping onto every social science fad that has ever come down the pike. And he’s ridden them well. He’s intellectually exploited them. Are you going to talk to [Harold] Guetzkow ?

Interviewer: We’re going to try.

J. David Singer: Have you heard from him at all? Is he unavailable?

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Interviewer: He's living in San Diego now, and we're still debating whether it would be worth a trip out there because the story we heard was [that he was quite fragile] and that Harold could probably talk to us for 15-20 minutes, and then he was going to be fading away.

J. David Singer: That's probably right.

Interviewer: Yes, but, we'd love to get a hold of him and see if we could pump him. But we'll see.

J. David Singer: But you know, plan B is to go to some of the writing of these guys that are not available, and even have a gifted student recite. I mean Guetzkow has laid out his views so clearly. I mean, I think they're silly but-

Interviewer: They're there.

J. David Singer: They're there. Certainly – and Anatole, and I don't think Anatole's views are that silly. His problem was that he started out being "soft on communism", which is a real liability.

Interviewer: Yes.

J. David Singer: And it also muddles your own head. You know, he was a youngster, an immigrant from Russia, who probably was pretty positive about the Bolsheviks as a young student, University of Chicago, 1930s... See, so Anatole's problem was he was very critical of the U.S., and it took him a long time to see that the Soviet's were probably even worse.

**Duration: 158 minutes**