

Subject: [External] EIC Roisman (CD) and EIC Smetana (CDP) Resignation Letter
May 4, 2022

To SRCD Executive Director Saima Hedrick:

With this message, we share our decision to resign from our roles as the Editor-in-Chief (EIC) of *Child Development* and *Child Development Perspectives*, respectively, in a manner consistent with relevant language in each of our contracts (i.e., not more than one year from today's date). To remain as the EIC of these journals would be untenable in light of actions of the Society that have eroded editorial autonomy, and more importantly, that have marginalized and silenced dissenting voices of various leaders, some employed by the Society (e.g., Dr. Leher Singh, outgoing Science Director) and others who have contributed vital service to the organization for decades (e.g., Dr. Lynn Liben, former EIC of *Monographs of the SRCD*). These actions by SRCD leadership make it impossible for us, in good conscience, to maintain a relationship with the organization.

We do not take these resignations lightly after our decades-long affiliation with the Society. For almost twenty years, Dr. Roisman has served continuously with distinction (according to all feedback provided to date by the SRCD) on the Editorial Board of *Child Development*, beginning as a Consulting Editor (2004-2010), later as an Associate Editor for both EIC Dr. Jeff Lockman and subsequently EIC Dr. Cynthia García Coll (2010-2019), and, most recently, as the Editor-in-Chief of the journal (2019-present). Dr. Smetana has served as a Consulting Editor of *Child Development* (1990-1995) and as Associate Editor of *Child Development* for both EICs Dr. Marc Bornstein (1998-2001) and Dr. Lynn Liben (2001-2004). She was the (elected) Secretary of SRCD from 2003-2009, during which time she was an ad-hoc member of the Publications Committee. Subsequently, she served several terms on the Publications Committee (2011-2017), including as its Chair (2013-2015). She also was appointed as a member of the SRCD Task Force on Scientific Integrity and Openness (2017-2019).

Unfortunately, our ability to serve our most vital function to the SRCD and field—to fully protect scholarly decision-making at two of the most prominent journals of our Society, including its flagship journal—has been rendered increasingly null and void by the leadership of the SRCD over the past few years as the Society has, in our view, transformed from a scholarly to an increasingly political organization. Though we have repeatedly expressed the following concerns to you and other SRCD leaders in writing and in many Zoom meetings over the last months—meetings we attended individually and together with the former EIC of *Monographs of the SRCD* Dr. Lynn Liben—we believe it is important to highlight our concerns here so there is clarity in the Society about why we feel we have no choice but to resign from our positions.

The precipitating factor is quite clear to us. It is our observation that SRCD is being severely mismanaged, resulting in a toxic environment in which dissenting voices are forced out or otherwise marginalized, with the effect of endless turnover among both those who work for the Society as well as those who selflessly provide vital service to it. In turn, this churn has made it impossible for EICs of the largest SRCD journals to receive the kind of continuity and quality of support necessary to operate in a fully professional

manner, as documented in both of our annual reports. We have worked with three Executive Directors, three Publications Managers, and two Science Directors (with a third presumably to be hired soon given Dr. Singh's recent announcement of her intent to leave the SRCD). Despite all this turnover, we have both made a good faith effort to uphold the intellectual integrity of the journals entrusted to our leadership.

Though the personnel issues described above do precede your tenure in the organization, they have gotten notably worse under present leadership, as detailed below. However, far more concerning are issues around editorial autonomy. As has been previously shared with you, the first SRCD Executive Director Dr. Roisman worked with, Dr. Laura Namy, was a fierce advocate for editorial autonomy, no doubt largely due to her deep understanding of and her own notable contributions to the field. Dr. Namy's commitment, importantly, was reflected not only in the contractual language Dr. Roisman co-signed and in her words, but in her deeds as well. These commitments followed the tradition established from the Society's founding and are also evident in the contract Dr. Smetana cosigned with previous Executive Director Lonnie Sherrod. There is much documented evidence that SRCD no longer takes its foundational commitments to editorial autonomy seriously, which we illustrate below with two salient examples.

First, Dr. Tamis-LeMonda, a current member of the SRCD Governing Council (GC), recently sent a memo to all members of the GC and the SRCD Publications Committee (PC) expressing her concerns about the review by GC of a long form paper accepted by Dr. Lynn Liben at *Monographs of the SRCD*, a memo that we understand as calling for greater transparency in GC about its processes and procedures related to the review of its journals. We should be clear: The review undertaken of a recent Monograph by GC, like the one Dr. Liben and we previously expressed concerns about to SRCD leadership, related to another Monograph, was by its very nature inconsistent with basic norms of editorial autonomy and contractual language. Had either of us been (or if one of the *Child Development* Associate Editors had become) the target of such a review, we would have resigned on the spot in light of contractual language reading, in part: "As Editor, Dr. Roisman/Dr. Smetana has complete authority to accept or reject manuscripts without review by any officer or employee of the SRCD nor by any member of its governance structure."

Before addressing the content of Dr. Tamis-LeMonda's thoughtful letter, we should note that it has come to our attention that SRCD leadership deliberately withheld that memo from the EICs of its journals despite the fact that Dr. Tamis-LeMonda addressed it to the Publications Committee (EICs included, who as you are aware are *ex officio* members of PC). It is indeed ironic that Dr. Tamis-LeMonda's letter, which called for more openness and transparency in the functioning of GC, was viewed as so dangerous and threatening that it needed to be withheld from some of the very committee members who were its intended recipients.

More importantly, the content of the Tamis-LeMonda memo increases our confidence that SRCD leadership was engaged in a potentially improper attempt to influence Dr. Liben's decision-making regarding this Monograph by way of specious claims about the scientific integrity of the review process at *Monographs*, as well as in expressing highly sensitive concerns about the content of the paper that, according to the Tamis-LeMonda memo, were later admitted to be without merit. Moreover, in our view,

SRCD leadership misrepresented via omission the nature of Dr. Liben's departure from *Monographs*, both directly to us and to its entire membership. This was done repeatedly (e.g., in a subsequent Publications Committee meeting). We interpret these actions as further covering up the reality that Dr. Liben was, de facto, forced out of her Editorship. Said another way, these actions by SRCD leadership had the effect even if not the intent to undermine Dr. Liben's editorial autonomy by tying her editorial decision-making at *Monographs* to potential reputational damage should she resist.

A second recent example involves the current SRCD Science Director, Dr. Leher Singh. Dr. Singh's treatment by leadership for her role in being an honest broker between the EICs and the PC has been deeply unsettling for us to witness. For example, when a member of PC used the discussion of Conflicts of Interest (COI) at the journals in a PC meeting to argue that EICs have an inherent COI for all papers that a member of their editorial board processes—with the implication that SRCD governance could independently evaluate decision-making related to specific articles at its journals—the EICs consulted with Dr. Singh in her role as Science Director. As you know, Dr. Singh subsequently brought this issue to the attention of the leadership of the organization. In doing so, she emphasized that any such claim about COIs would seem fundamentally inconsistent with contractual language—and, importantly, in violation of broadly accepted and basic norms of editorial autonomy endorsed and upheld at other developmental science journals. Leadership initially seemed to support the position of the EICs but then subsequently acted in a manner that could be interpreted as de facto retaliation against Dr. Singh by silencing her in relation to the affairs of the Publications Committee generally. (Dr. Singh was initially told that she could attend PC meetings but could not speak but then was told to step away completely from PC and all subcommittees, including the Data Tracking Initiative subcommittee, which includes a spot reserved for the Science Director.) Asking the Science Director to remove herself from these activities essentially eliminates the most essential aspects of her portfolio, making her job irrelevant within the organization. More recently, when Dr. Singh shared Dr. Tamis-LeMonda's letter with an EIC (definitionally, a member of the PC), leadership made it clear that the memo was being withheld from EICs and further sought to sanction Dr. Singh for, at worst, naively sharing a memo addressed to all members of the PC with a member of the PC.

As you know, during the time when leadership was pressuring all EICs to sign a unilateral modification to our contracts known as the "SRCD Code of Conduct," Dr. Roisman's father was dying. One of Dr. Roisman's last conversations with his father was about the fact that he was concerned about signing an amendment to his contract that would include broad non-disclosure language effectively preventing EICs from discussing SRCD leadership's attempts to squelch dissent and editorial autonomy at its journals, make EICs subject to kangaroo court-style proceedings of the sort that led to Dr. Liben's departure from her EIC role, and would arbitrarily expand the scope of what is already a relentless, more-than-part-time-job by pressuring EICs to prepare for and attend meetings not specified in the original contracts we signed. It was obvious to Dr. Roisman's father, who was a principled man, that his son had no choice but to step down. Nonetheless, even after Dr. Liben's departure, we stayed on at the helm of our respective journals out of misplaced loyalty. But with leadership's actions toward Dr. Singh in particular, SRCD leadership has made our decision today very easy. As members of a scientific organization, we must adhere to some bedrock principles; these include openness, integrity, and

editorial autonomy. Our loyalty lies with the honest pursuit of science as well as the ethical, kind, and competent individuals who have been forced out of the organization by leadership. And so today we join them even as we hope the SRCD can change course before current leadership fundamentally damages the reputation of its scholarly journals.

We believe that it is vitally important that GC modifies its Bylaws (through vote of the Society membership) to affirm editorial autonomy in the way specified in our contracts and, consistent with language above, that Editors have complete authority to accept or reject manuscripts without review by any officer or employee of the SRCD nor by any member of its governance structure. We also believe that the statement that leadership intends to add to our journal acceptance letters, stating that SRCD has the right to withdraw manuscripts from publication if it deems it appropriate, must not proceed. This text is a stark departure from the norms of our science and will surely cause irreparable harm to SRCD's status and standing as a scientific society.

In closing, we reaffirm our commitment to *Child Development* and *Child Development Perspectives* and the sanctity of editorial autonomy in decision-making at these journals while we complete our service. For these reasons, we are requesting that all communications from this point forward be in writing so there is no ambiguity as we move ahead. More specifically, our position is that we will not be attending any meetings not explicitly described in our contractual agreement from now until the end of our service to the Society, no more than one year from today's date, as prescribed in the contracts we signed.

Glenn I. Roisman, PhD.

Outgoing Editor-in-Chief,
Child Development

Judith G. Smetana, PhD.

Outgoing Editor-in-Chief,
Child Development Perspectives

Cc: SRCD Governing Council, SRCD Publications Committee, and SRCD Past-Presidents and President-Elect, 2009-Present