Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Abigail J. Stewart

Interviewed by Alexandra Rutherford

Ann Arbor, MI

November 15, 2017

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Yellow Highlight: Text that Dr. Stewart added upon reviewing the transcript in January, 2021

AR: Alexandra Rutherford, Interviewer

AS: Abigail Stewart, Interview participant

AR: Yes, so it looks like we are now recording. So the first thing I'll have you do, very simple, is just to state your full name and place and date of birth for the record.

AS: OK, Abigail J. Stewart. I was born in Washington DC November 7th 1949.

AR: Great, OK perfect. And we're in Ann Arbor Michigan on November…

AS: 15th.

AR: 15th, thank you! [laughs] 2017, great. OK. So the first thing I want to have you talk about is how you started to - I have phrased this question a couple of different ways, in a couple of different protocols, but basically, it's how do you relate to feminism, or where did your feminism start?

AS: OK, so where it started is, very long ago, I think it started with my mother who always talked - when I was little kid, when a project came home from school she would say "How about picking a woman?" And so that was always - we had to do a project on a great New Yorker and the teacher was pushing us towards people who became president or things like that, who were of course men, and my mother said "How about a great woman?" This of course led me to figure out who were great women, so I sort of very early was aimed that way. She worked for Eleanor Roosevelt as a young woman and that shaped her and me indirectly, so that's a point. Secondly, in 1970 I was a college student and these three amazing feminist texts were published, and I can remember sitting on the steps of Judd Hall at Wesleyan University reading Kate Millett**,** Shulamith Firestone, Germaine Greer. I was writing my thesis on women and they completely - I mean, I was already thinking about women, but it was this clearly was a new moment of theorizing the situation of women. I was totally mesmerized and excited about it. Of course Psychology wasn't so interested in that [laughs].

{2 min}

AR: Right, well, what were you studying at Wesleyan?

AS: I was a Psychology major and I was doing an honours thesis in Psychology about women, but the field wasn't doing anything. I was very conscious of that disconnect. So I was ambivalent

about whether to go to graduate school and stay in Psychology. I thought I might go to law school so I decided to get a Masters in Social Psych at London School of Economics simply because it was a one year degree and it was in Europe and that seemed cool [laughs]. By the time I had to then reapply to graduate school or reinstate my application, I had decided yeah, I'll go to graduate school and see what happens. Then my advisor David McClelland**,** who didn't do anything about gender but did think it was important to think about women, understood they were half of the human race and was a benevolent hands-off advisor, which worked fine for me. He was perfectly willing to have me study women, which I did. And he facilitated my doing what I wanted to do which was a longitudinal study of women which is not easy to do while in graduate school. But he remembered that women at Radcliffe had been "mistakenly" tested in 1960 in the context of the Harvard Student Study [of men]; it was an accident. 250 of them had taken a TAT and it was now 14 years later. So I could follow them up. We went to the health service and he and I found this box and there were these untouched TATs with these women's names on them; I mean it was completely not what we would do now but then it was normal.

AR: Fortuitous for you! [laughs]

AS: It was fantastic that he remembered that this had happened and that they were probably kept somewhere.

AR: Yeah! And was that group of women who had been tested-- were they a part of that larger kind of study…

AS: Harvard Student Study?

AR: Yeah.

AS: Well they weren't, so they were never looked at, but it happened because of that larger study. So they were never given any other questionnaires or tests or anything, which was kind of good for me, because they weren't really an existing worn out sample. And by the time I wrote to see if they would be interested, they were excited. They felt like "Our story hasn't been told-- we'd love to help." So they were very cooperative so it was very exciting for me to be able to do that and Dave McClelland was very supportive of my doing this. My basic question was: at the time, psychology was committed to the idea that women's lives were contingent. That you couldn't really expect personality to have any predictive value because women's lives were defined by whoever they married, which they certainly would do, [laughs] and the children they would inevitably have. I was resistant to this idea and thought, OK, that might define the conditions of her life, but surely she has space within these conditions to make choices. So that was my question, does personality predict within different life conditions? And it did, and so that was sort of my way of making my way, dealing with the state of the field and my desire to think about women having agency within constraint.

AR: Did you think about it at the time as being a feminist thing to do?

AS: Oh yeah!

AR: Yeah, it was pretty obvious?

{6 min}

AS: Yeah, completely. You know my undergraduate thesis was completely framed around Simone de Beauvoir's reasoning, so yeah I was totally involved the feminist theorizing of that moment.

AR: What about, were you involved in any, or what was your involvement in feminist activism?

AS: Yeah, not so much. I mean there were groups of women, mostly graduate students in Cambridge at the time that I was involved with. I was much more involved with the anti-war movement and the civil rights movement. So I was on the margin of that. Nancy Chodorow and I were in a seminar together and it was that moment.

AR: Wow!

AS: But it wasn't that moment; it wasn't activist in the way you're meaning [laughs].

AR: Sure, no I get that. A lot of people I have interviewed have said in that year they were more involved in anti-war and civil rights, and the feminist thing kinda-

AS: And anti-war was so potent. My cohort was drafted, so all these guys were going to Vietnam and some of them were dying and it didn't seem right to me. This is the classic story of women's issues, right: it's not as important as this thing that's happening to the men…

AR: To the men, well that was the National Council of Women Psychologists, same thing! How could you complain about your status in the profession when there's a war on?

AS: Yeah! And it's worldwide, this has been the story of feminism worldwide, that women decide, and they do decide to take the back seat.

AR: Yeah, well it's another way of being contingent.

AS: Yeah, exactly.

AR: So at this time you're at Wesleyan, then London for a year then back at Harvard in the early 70's, right? What was it like to be a woman at Harvard in the early 70's?

AS: Oh. [rolls eyes]

AR: I mean you had a supportive supervisor…

{7 min}

AS: Yes, that was crucial. If I hadn't I would've been out of there. My problems with Harvard were less about being a woman, although that was a factor, and more about the Harvard-ness of Harvard [laughs]. That was very hard for me. I didn't identify in any way with that culture, I was kind of resolutely middle-class. My parents were up from less affluent even than middle-class backgrounds. I had no identification with the kind of upper-classness of Harvard and I found it distasteful. The gender issues were prominent and visible. There were no women faculty to speak of. I did work for Matina Horner--she was the only one when I applied; when I got there there

was another one, Cathy Widom, who was junior. We were advised not to work with someone who didn't have tenure and Matina was already president of Radcliffe, so I worked for her answering her *fear of success* mail.

AR: Oh really?

AS: I did because I just wanted to be around a woman who had a PhD in Psychology. So that was actually great.

AR: Do you remember what you thought about the *fear of success* stuff when it come out?

AS: Oh yeah! I couldn't believe the mail, I mean she had bags full of women saying "Oh my god, this is me." "This has happened to me out of graduate school when I was this close, had my thesis I was almost finished." So this notion that, you know, you get close and then it's too alarming. Whether you were alarmed or someone around you was alarmed. It's all of the above, but anyway she clearly touched a cultural nerve, no question. Whenever we think about it as a kind of construct in the field and it does have a history that should be thought about, there is no question that it did touch a nerve. It's like *imposter syndrome*; there are these concepts that psychology disavows [laughs]. But they do speak to people's experiences. Conscious experience, and realize "Oh that's the name for what happened to me."

AR: Yeah, so can I go back a little bit? One of the things we like to do with these interviews is try to get at some experiences that may not be so visible in people's published work and so on, their CV's. Back to just your growing up and having a mother who kind of pushed you- herself worked for Eleanor Roosevelt and so on. As you were doing this do you have any sense of kinda, did you have siblings? Were they also kind of moving in these directions, what was your kind of family dynamic like?

AS: Complicated. [laughs] Like every family.

AR: Of course.

AS: I have a brother and a sister. My sister is a half-sister but she was always with us. She's 6 years older, I never knew other than for her to be my sister. She was very academically skilled and talented but she also was artistically talented which her father had been. So she in one sense felt different than the rest of our family because the rest of us were very political and very academic, and she was those as well but she had this other side that we kind of didn't have. My brother's 17 months younger so we were lumped together in a big way. We looked alike as kids and we were very, very close. Gender, really, I felt it, when he became attracted to sports - this is all pre-Title IX (11:00) - that was the end of him as my buddy. It was an enormous loss for me. But he was also a very strong ally, and when he saw what he saw as unfair gender things happen to me he was on my side. I felt supported. Which was, it's different than I think some women have, not having that ally relationship to a boy growing up. My parents were very, very political, that was the dinner table conversation. They both worked in politics but my mother was visibly to all of us a force of nature, really bright and totally bored. I was very much a product of the 50's. Displacement of women from the labour force and beaching of women in homes where they were bored out of their minds, devoted themselves intensively to their children who felt the

intensity of that surveillance and prompted much of which in retrospect I understand to be really good and helpful but at the time I fought it tooth and nail.

{12 min}

AR: Right, and so what did she, I mean, what was your sense of her as seeing you make your way through graduate school?

AS: For a long time I had very little understanding of her perspective. I really was individuating, I was on my path and it was clear that academia was something neither of my parents had pursued; it was my thing. And neither of my siblings-- well my sister taught community college, but she always identified as an artist over an academic. That was a way to pay the bills, and she was a marvellous teacher but academic scholarship wasn't her thing. My brother was a lawyer and then he now writes popular history books and is a happier person [laughs]. So he's back to being a pal. So, I was gonna say something about my mother. Oh! You asked my sense of how she saw it all. As I got older I understood how much she loved what she perceived to be my career success; *that* mattered to her. Earlier that was a weight on me and I didn't want to know about it, but as I got older I brought her into situations where she perceived me as getting recognition because it meant so much to her, more than to me. So yes, she and I had a very, very close relationship in the last 20 years of her life, which wasn't about that but about me understanding her better. Not being at all threatened by her enthusiasm for what I was doing, because by then it was me doing what I was doing.

AR: Yeah, so you finished up your PhD at Harvard around 1975, right? And you were by this time, it sounds like, committed to Personality Psychology.

AS: I was, yes, and am. In a certain way.

AR: Of course. In retrospect you were doing work on women; what other kind of literature was there around for you in Psychology?

AS: Well I certainly never drew a sharp boundary between Personality and Social Psychology; that was always - and Developmental, because I was always "lifespan-ish" and thinking about lives. So really all three of those fields to me I could identify with all of them. I also was in the last gasp of "Social Relations Psychology."

AR: I was going to ask about the Department of Social Relations!

AS: Yeah so, we were by then it was called "Psychology and Social Relations" but we were required to take sociology and anthropology which is why I went there, because I wanted that. I did work—for example, I published a piece that was out of a cross-cultural comparative course I took because it was Social Relations. I loved that perspective, but it was dying. The guys that founded it, and the few women, were dying, but they also were - the field of psychology was becoming so consolidated in a particular way that there was no room for Social Relations anymore. I still-- my degree is in Psychology and Social Relations but it ended soon after me, I mean my cohort**.** One other thing: you asked about what it was like to be a woman at Harvard. My class was half women and that was remarked constantly! It was the first class that was half

women and more women dropped out than men, but some didn't. Some of the women who dropped out were terrific brilliant young women. So it was still a hard time to take yourself seriously and feel that others were taking you seriously, all of those things. I was so determined not to get off the train. You know, sort of, very intense for me that there was no way that was going to happen, but I certainly understood how costly it was for someone.

AR: Do you remember who was in your cohort in terms of the women?

AS: Sure! So our class was Personality and Developmental. Some are very well known psychologists: Nora Newcombe, who's a developmental psychologist at Temple. Also Barbara Rogoff at UC Santa Cruz. Among the men there was Richie Davidson, of U Wisconsin Madison, and Michael Basseches, of Suffolk University.

AR: OK, interesting. So remind me, when was it that it became possible for women to actually get degrees that were conferred by Harvard?

AS: Well PhDs were [given], even in my time, we already got them. What used to be Radcliffe changed, so that in 1963 degrees started to come from "Harvard-Radcliffe." A merger agreement was created in 1977, according to which degrees came from Harvard, but in 1999 Radcliffe actually dissolved as a separate entity.

AR: Yeah, OK so tell me a little bit about your career trajectory post PhD then?

{17 min}

AS: I taught for 13 years at BU, Boston University. We had a great life at Boston and I loved being there, actually. It has a kind of wonderfully left tradition. It is where Jewish and radical scholars who were exiled from other places or couldn't get jobs went. It had a civil rights history with [Martin] Luther King [Jr] and it had many first-gen[eration] students. I loved teaching them even if it was private; these people, these families were sending their kids to BU because it was BU. And it was urban. So I actually, I loved all those features of BU. What I didn't love was John Silber's presidency. He hated the social sciences in general, and he hated women, in my opinion. He was a really hostile presence towards faculty. He would excoriate faculty at faculty meetings and around the time that I left BU a whole bunch of women who saw ourselves as having been accorded "pet" status for him, left. We had a strong identification with each other in very different fields. The disciplinary philosophy was very high, there was no meaningful Women's Studies program. There was a thing called Women's Studies, which was a list of people and courses, and I taught Psychology of Women, which already existed. Faye Crosby, as a graduate student, taught it at BU, which was fun. We overlapped one year and then there were, you know, Evelyn Nakano Glenn was there in Sociology. She was denied tenure; there were terrible things going on. So I had a tiny exposure to Women's Studies' interdisciplinary realties, but it was hard, really hard. There was zero institutional interest or support even though there was student interest. When I was interviewed then at Michigan everyone asked me, in the leadership: "How long is this Psych of Women thing gonna be necessary, you know, probably not much longer, right?"

AR: Oh, so they thought that was a temporary thing because of the women's movement.

AS: Yeah to get us past [laughs].

AR: Interesting. Do you remember when you first taught, what kinds of things were you drawing on, what kinds of literature?

AS: Well it was always taught in those days from a lifespan perspective. It was a lot of developmental, gender socialization, pink and blue, all that stuff. There was much less on, there was a little adolescence, there was stuff on teenage pregnancy, I'm trying to remember, a lot of stuff on motherhood. I remember being very concerned not to focus too much on motherhood feeling like that's what the literature had, but that I didn't want the students to think that's what being a woman was. So, there was much less on careers but it was starting, there was some at that point. By the early 80's life balance was happening but in the very beginning in 75-6 it was much thinner. Aging hardly existed and it was only about menopause. Which, you know, we later learned was kind of wasn't a lot of there, there for psychology. Then it was the dominant, so it was all medical, body grounded stuff which I *hated*. But it was what there was that you kind of had to navigate around it. I did a lot of interdisciplinary kinds of things at the time that I didn't know were odd, because they were my impulses. So I did a lot of life histories of women in the class and sort of put biographical materials in front of the students, autobiographical usually and they loved that. Then I developed a life history course because I think it was both men and women, so yeah.

{22 min}

AR: So I'm curious because life history and narrative have been consistent themes throughout your career and I can see in some respects where that sort of comes from, in terms of your training at Harvard and so on. Personally for you, in terms of a method how did you come to that and what role has it played in your kind of attitude toward method?

AS: From the beginning I was taught content analysis at Wesleyan and at Harvard and the way I was taught it was very open-ended. So you could think about any text; it could be even fictional, it could be autobiographical - I was more interested in people than text, but I was interested in the texts people wrote. And I was taught to take seriously- so from the beginning I saw psychology as including the subjective or the perspective of the person rather than just our categories. I was really taught, though it didn't have the name at the time, a kind of grounded theory version of ideas about content analysis. McClelland for example taught a course that started with myth and you would read myths and look for themes across myths and poetry. He had you thinking about all kinds of documents that he had done work on, had students do work on Grecian urns, you know, kind of what's on them and what causes those images to matter. So I definitely saw - Psychology for me always included this meaning-making that people were doing and that the psychologist wasn't necessarily in charge of. I understood that to be a minority perspective in Psychology, but I did understand it to be *in* Psychology, I didn't think of it as antithetical. I wasn't socialized very heavily into a normative mainstream Psychology, so I didn't understand quite how marginal it was. And it was my-- it fit me! I had been an English major and History major before I was a Psych major. I declared my major in November of my senior year. So I really have always been all over the place. So still at BU I was working on Vera Brittain's

papers and I was totally interested in the question of how in her middle-age she reshaped her autobiography based on a diary she had actually written as an adolescent and young woman in World War I, and by then it was the between wars period. She's rethinking what happened then from a very different place, both in terms of her own life and history. That was absolutely me! It was perfect. I loved working the archive, I went to Hamilton in Canada to work in the archive at McMaster University. I loved the sense of history that I could engage with and of both her life history and the larger social history. So none of that seemed odd in my training and all of it was odd to psychologists.

{25 min}

AR: I was going to say yeah, how did you make your way in Psychology given that you had this less-than-mainstream orientation?

AS: I did try to 'pay my dues', which was the language of the time, and I was also encouraged to be myself. BU had created a benevolent space for me, saying "Do these things you want to do, but publish in *JPSP* enough." I did; it was not easy for me to play that [game] or do that. I wasn't always happy doing it. I was very, very anxious, because honestly I hadn't been very trained to do that and also it didn't interest me as much as what my heart went to. So they allowed me space to do both and they, BU- I think I thrived in the field mainly because I started at BU and BU enabled me to do this, and that was the department. There was a very benevolent spirit, there was a department chair Joe Speismen who made that space for not just me but lots of people. I think if I hadn't kept all of that going at the same time I wouldn't have been able to end up in a place, as I have, where I could be 50% Psychology and 50% Women's Studies for 30 years, and that has been an incredible joy. A gift to somebody like me, you know; it was ideal, it just was perfect. I don't think I would've been Women's Studies enough if I had been more mainstream - if I had been asked to be a more mainstream psychologist, and done it, who knows if I could've; probably not.

AR: And how did your Psychology colleagues relate to you as a feminist?

AS: It's funny, so of course they relate to me as a feminist. They assumed that I was always going to speak up on gender issues; they didn't understand I'd [also be] speaking up on other issues. So that was always surprising to them; that I felt just as strongly about other things, but they were never surprised that I spoke up on gender issues. At BU that was, it wasn't - I never felt criticized, but I did feel identified. When I came here, interestingly, because it was a joint position, I felt the department also related to me as an official feminist [laughs], but less. There was more a sense of if you're a tenured faculty member at the Psych department in Michigan you were really good, so you must be fine. So whatever it is you do is fine. There was a kind of liberation from needing to 'pay dues' anymore. There was a sense of whatever I do is gonna be OK, if only because I have this other legitimacy as a Women's Studies scholar. They can always say well- and often I would have these bizarre interactions with mainstream colleagues here where they'd say things like, "Is post-structuralism a thing, do you know what it is?" "Well yes." "You know it's really a crock, right?" And I would sort of say, "Well no, actually it's got an intellectual base, meaning, significance and it's important for psychologists to think about, it's

not actually a great threat to psychology." They'd be very surprised and they'd be very interested that that was the case because clearly that was how they understood postmodernism, post-structuralism as all just a big threat. In fact I remember one colleague saying, "When I hear about postmodernism I feel I'm looking into the abyss." So it was terrifying, and I think they kind of used me as a normalizing sort of translator. I could – postmodernism is not a big threat, it's OK to have data, and care about data. You know, so I think they treated me more as a translator, and a kind of informant in a way that I kind of enjoyed. I mean sometimes it was annoying but mostly it was enjoyable.

AR: Right! Right! So when you came to the University of Michigan the terms from the outset were 50/50?

{29 min}

AS: Yeah! That was the advertised position. They had a position in the Humanities, one. And they had the open position in Social Science, one. That was 50/50. This is all much changed now, but at the time there were these two tenured positions, and that was huge for Women's Studies. That these were people who had budgeted appointments, and the fact that we were seen as legitimated by our departments, was also important. So the fact that Psychology, which is a highly-ranked department, as you know; that I was in Psychology gave Women's Studies more credibility, so that felt good.

AR: I was going to ask about that, because the other side of the relationship is, how did the Women's Studies folks feel about having a psychologist?

AS: So there were lots of places that they wouldn't have felt good; here it was fine. Women's Studies at UM was founded by psychologists, including Elizabeth Douvan, Judith Bardwick - they were both very much a part of founding Women's Studies. Neither of them had appointments in Women's Studies at the beginning; Libby did later. But there were four senior women campus-wide. The others, in Anthropology and History, fostered the development of Women's Studies, which was mostly done by graduate students. Including Gayle Rubin [laughs].

AR: Wow that's pretty good [laughs]!

AS: And there were others who became scholars, in many fields. Yeah, Psychology was very much part of the equation from the beginning, and Social Science. It's an uneasy relationship, of course. Even here, it's uneasy on both sides, and it's egalitarian. It's not a relationship in which social scientists feel subordinated or defeated or anything, which I have seen in other places. And the humanities here, as everywhere, have real standing and authority, which they often feel they don't have in other places in the institution.

AR: Yeah, OK so I was going to ask because I thought you have, Sara [McClelland] told me that you would be able to tell me about all kinds of institutional history as well as personal history, So I was going ask you a little bit about the history of Women's Studies at Michigan.

AS: Sure, so the first course was taught around 1970, a Women's Studies course and the first sort of instantiation of something that was known as a Women's Studies program was in 1973.

AR: That's very early.

{32 min}

AS: Yeah very early, and that was partly because of the blessings of these senior women who had some clout in university at large. Saying: this is important and we need to support this. So I show up on the scene and understand it from my perspective in 87; I was recruited in '85 and I didn't get here till '87. So let me just go back to '85, it was - it blew me away to go to the potluck of the Women's Studies people, I wanted to be there forever, you know. It was Arlene Saxonhouse in Political Science and Anne Herrmann in English, Domna Stanton in French, Sherry Ortner in Anthropology-- these incredible scholars of Women's Studies that I would have access to in this place. I didn't care if I ever did any Psychology at that moment! I thought I need to be there and learn what they know. So I agreed to teach feminist theory, I didn't exactly know what that was. I knew, you know, Beauvoir and [Mary] Wollstonecraft and kind of the canonical people, and I knew the '70's people that I had been exposed to, but this was 87. There had been a lot of action since then that I didn't know a whole lot about. But I was so excited to learn it and they were so excited to have me come, it was wonderful! It was an incredible opening up for me at that moment when I was just promoted to full professor. So the moment when many people experience a kind of boredom with what they're doing, they're ready to take on more things, so it was very, very exciting.

Now the Women's Studies program was about to go through quite a spasm where it went from being what it had been since '73, a collective, run with something called Marathon Meetings twice a year. Jointly run by the faculty, the graduate students and staff, everything ran on consensus, which was of course impossible. So whoever showed up at the meeting determined what happened, at the next meeting it would be all undone, and the college was deeply frustrated by - they used to say "We don't know who's the director" and of course in women's studies people wondered, "why would we want a director? We're feminists." In '89, soon after I got here, we accepted the idea that we would become--and this was fought tooth and nail by some people--we would become "regularized" as a program with a three-year directorship and the director would be appointed by the dean, but we would have input. At Michigan the chairs are mostly who the department wants, but the dean appoints them. So there would be some stability from the college's point of view and there were a lot of ideas, really an open battle about what we were giving up. Prior to that there had been something called a *cascading directorship* which meant, you had co-directors in semester one, in semester two one rotated off and one rotated in with an existing person and then that would do- so it was a new pair every semester. I had done that a couple times and by the time they decided on a regularized director, I was it. I mean, I was asked to be it, and so in '89 we became that. And we fought, I worked really hard with the college and the whole program to retain our autonomy. We did operate very collectively, even then; we had lots of meetings in people's kitchens around the kitchen table, planning strategy. You weren't a chair in the sense that every job fell to you, you needed to bring everyone along. We gradually increased the number of budgeted lines. We asked that people who always taught for Women's Studies like Martha Vicinus, would have a piece of her line stabilized so we could establish a curriculum. We had an associate dean, the budget guy-- his name was John Cross. He

helped. He said to me, "You don't have any chips," and I said, "But you could give me some," and he said, "OK." So he was willing to have the big departments English and Psych allow people to "harden" their contribution to Women's Studies into a fraction of their appointment, so we could count on their teaching in a stable curriculum. That is how it started. And then, you know, we fought for tenure. We fought jointly with African American Studies, that we needed theorists of color who would be [appointed] across the two and didn't want them to have to be in a third unit, It turned out that everyone wanted to be in a "discipline" too, so eventually when we filled positions they were often in three units. But we got the agreement that we could do it, it took a big fight.

There was a memorable meeting where the African American man, Earl Lewis, who was heading the Center for Afro-American and African Studies or CAAS, and I were present at the executive committee for the College, and they talked about, well, who would evaluate these people for tenure? He was in History, I was in Psychology, two excellent departments, and I looked at them and said, "We actually have the vote in our departments, we're already deciding on tenure cases." And you could see them like, "Oh, we didn't think of these places as having the vote." Anyway, there was a sea change and we are what we are now. So the transformations included, in 2002, the Institute for Research on Women and Gender. Women's Studies agitated for that. I stepped down as director of Women's Studies and became the director of that.

{38 min}

AR: And that was conceived of as a research unit?

AS: Yes, and as bringing new resources to the faculty of Women's Studies which had always been seen, in a completely limited way: you did your scholarship in the department and you did your teaching, half of it or some of it in Women's Studies. So this was an attempt to bring those two things, feminist scholarship and feminist teaching, together for us. IRWG [Institute for Research on Women and Gender] was then established in 2000 and somewhere in that same zone, we were housed together in Lane Hall and the only occupants of Lane Hall. It's a beautiful thing [laughs] that we have this physical presence at Michigan and it's a lovely old building that was renovated for us. We had a street fair to open the building, you know, merchants were all involved, it was great! Very exciting moment. So that's a big part of the institutional history and we became a department even more recently, in 2007. We are now a department, we have one hundred percent tenure-track faculty now, as well as any other kind of budgeted and unbudgeted affiliation, so we still are a thousand flowers (39:10). Which is good.

AR: Yeah, but that's an incredible act of institution building. I mean, that's huge. Yeah, I want to go back a little bit to -

AS: its '95 [1995], sorry, that IRWG started. I said 2000 but that's when Lane Hall happened. '95 is the institute, 2000 is when Lane Hall happened. And I got my own biography mixed up here because in 2002 I stepped down from IRWG and started to run ADVANCE (39:40)

AR: Right, so during this period – well, obviously you were at BU, then here [UM]. In terms of your relationship to what's happening with feminist psychology, in terms of all the stuff that's

happening with Division 35, Association of Women, that it's getting institutionalized in these ways. What was your-

{40 min}

AS: I was not a mover or shaker. I was definitely in favor of it all, but I was not an institution builder within Psychology. I was a beneficiary. I mean, I feel very, very grateful for the things that got created. I was somewhat skeptical, frankly. I thought it was the mainstream coopting us. I was more radical then than now perhaps, more interdisciplinary too. So it wasn't where I put my energy. I was always in Division 35 [Society for the Psychology of Women], I always cared about AWP [Association for Women in Psychology], I have always been in SPSSI [Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues], and I have spent more institutional time in SPSSI than the others, although I have always felt grateful. You know, wanted to see them thrive.

AR: Sure, sure, no, that makes sense. So I want to ask you a bit about some of your research too during this time period so we don't get to far afield into the institutional stuff -

AS: Can I just say one more thing about feminist psychology? Because we started a joint doctoral program in 1995.

AR: 1995, somewhere in there?

AS: Yeah, it was in there. I started having doctoral students with identities in both places. And feminist psychology started being a meaningful identity for them and therefore I got more engaged psychologically with producing feminist psychologists. Before that, I think gender psychology or Psychology of Women, I was more ambivalent about. But feminist psychology I was very comfortable with, and when that became kind of an important thing for me to be facilitating for my students, that shifted my engagement.

AR: I'm curious, when you say you were ambivalent about Psychology of Women and Psychology of Gender, can you comment on that?

AS: I was always very unhappy with sex differences [research]. That's what gender meant at the beginning in psychology and I really didn't want to deal with that at all. Psychology of Women had this very essentialist, you know: motherhood and all about the body. So either one, that's what I mean by that they didn't appeal to me. What appealed to me is the kind of feminist psychology that has an analysis of gender and an analysis of women's situation and that wasn't really what was really going on in those two spaces as I saw it.

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AR: Right, right. I was going to ask you, given that at one point we were talking about the late 80's, what was your reaction to Carol Gilligan's kind of work and that kind of thing, given it came out of Harvard and so on?

AS: I was almost always pushed by people to have a fight with Carol, to debate her, or to counter her. I never felt it was going to be productive for feminist psychologists to do that. Ticking each other off seemed like the wrong way to go. I thought she identified important things. Whether

they were grounded in female bodies-- I had a lot of skepticism of that from the beginning--but I also thought she was talking about things that mattered. The *ethics of care* seemed like an important thing to think about and I thought it existed in men and women. So there was a lot of pressure on me to take her on and I didn't want to, partly because I felt like she had some valuable theorizing that she was bringing into psychology, or trying to. So yes I was uncomfortable with the essentialism she - face to face, she and I certainly talked during these years. She denied any essentialist assumption and so I had to take her, I felt I should take her at her word that it is not what she meant, even if it's how she was read.

AR: Yeah, no, she said that over the years that she has been miscast.

AS: Yeah, and I think she did identify a very troubling thing that occurs for many girls in puberty, and that's not quite at this moment, I think a bit later, but we've seen an explosion of work verifying that yeah there is something important that happens.

AR: Yeah, OK so I wanted to make sure we talk about - I'm skipping around a little bit I know, but can you tell me a little bit more about the genesis of the *Global Feminisms Project*?

AS: Oh yeah! So that was a wonderful, well to me, an exciting and wonderful thing. Women's Studies was very much in a moment of asking itself how can Humanities and Social Science faculty engage in the same project. Not separately do a parallel thing, which Anne Herman and I worked on in our volume on feminist theory, but how can we actually mutually contribute? And we did a project on censorship where we tried to do that and I think there was some success there, but it died. As most projects do [laughs]. There was a thought of, yeah these two perspectives bring different assets to the table and it is more productive to think from both perspectives. So *Global Feminisms* came out of that, as well as a moment of globalization that was both present and being critiqued in Women's Studies, as it should be. So the idea was that this was something humanists and social scientists could value together, contribute to together, and use in their teaching, both. It was also an intervention in the idea that feminism travels west to east, so we wanted to unearth the local about feminism globally and ground our project in the local. We also tried so hard--never fully successfully-- to decenter the U.S. So we said the U.S. is just a site like any other, we have to do exactly the same thing here that we do in Poland, India, or China. So there were lots of ethical dilemmas we got to debate and think about and care about. How do we make sure that the places we work with want this and we're not just exploiting them and taking oral histories? How can we be sure? And so we worked with true partnerships that were real on-the-ground, that assured that the collaborating unit wanted it as much as we did. And wanted our assistance, because technically and financially we had a lot to offer and we wanted it to be welcomed rather than resented. For example, for China and for Poland, hosting a website was an impossibility, politically. So to have these available on a website that maybe their people could get to it, maybe they couldn't, was important. So that's how it started.

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At Rackham, our graduate school had a grant program. We were kind of gestating this, and then Rackham put out this call for proposals of interdisciplinary grants and they were going to fund two campus wide. We figured we had very little chance, but we wrote up this idea about global

feminisms and we got it! It was $250,000, which to us was like a million dollars. Although now we understand that was nowhere near enough for what we needed to do. So of course we did it like all feminist projects with volunteer labour. It was all of that, and it brought the Women's Studies faculty and graduate students together in a kind of collaborative way. It meant there were liaisons for each country who were from various different departments. Everybody really had to think about what is an oral history and how can it be data for social scientists but also a narrative? And of course that was natural to me.

AR: Well I was going to ask, was the oral history angle just always there, or what was the discussion around getting it to be an oral history project?

AS: Well because texts, autobiographical texts made sense to the humanists and also to social scientists. So it was a space that brought us together. Both Domna Stanton and Sid [Sidonie] Smith had worked in autobiography in the humanities and saw oral history as autobiography. We saw it another way, but it was mutually compatible. They didn't mind if people asked people questions [laughs]; that was fine. Yeah, so oral history was in it from the beginning.

AR: Yeah, yeah. OK so there were a lot of complexities about coordinating this in the way that you wanted to which was in as an egalitarian political way as possible.

AS: Exactly.

AR: Right, and so, tell me a little bit about how it evolved and sort of where you're at now.

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AS: OK, so the first four sites were the beginning, you know, the nucleus of it all, and we established a site directory in each place. That was challenging, but we always worked through people who knew people on each side. So there's a story about each one, but the core story is that we wanted, as I said, it to be a collaboration where archiving oral histories with feminists made sense, was their goal. And then we had a meeting of all the four sites physically here. We tried to not have it here and the other sites said, "we want to come to the U.S, and you have the money to host us while we don't." Which was true; we hadn't sort of thought through how our privilege also obligated us to do things. So we did that and it was wonderful. It was fascinating to see that the Poles and the Chinese felt totally similar. They wanted to know each other because of state socialism and state feminism, which we knew precious little about. And the U.S and India-- we gradually understood that we were alike, having a British colonial history, the inheritance of a certain kind of legal system, and we were so much more multicultural than either [Poland or China] - they were also very homogenous, which we totally were not. So the alliances broke down the geographic boundaries immediately-- I mean the felt alliances, the felt similarities-- and they were unexpected on all sides. That was completely fascinating. So we discussed every procedural issue. What kind of interview protocol would we have? It was always very loose. It had about eight questions and Poland ignored it, so they just asked, "tell me about your life as a feminist activist" [laughs]. And they were very influenced by psychoanalysis and that kind of associative interview made sense to them. So they ignored us, ignored the protocol that they had agreed to. We agreed that people would have unedited files even if they had to be

edited to be on the website to protect people's safety. We were committed to that. We wanted to know, "is this dangerous work where you are?" We want to be respectful. So we had a bunch of discussions about all these procedural matters and also how would we choose interviewees in each site. We put some criteria in place: diverse aims of activism - like, are you trying to change a law, are you trying to offer a service, what are you trying to do? So across ten there should be diversity, there should be diverse generations, we did have that as a goal. There should be diversity geographically in the places that are really big, and three of us were: China, India, and us. And beyond that it was up to the sites. Each site made its own decisions and we did ask them to kind of document how they made their decisions, which no one ever really did. The U.S site (at UM) had a very strong ideology about intersectionality, so it was also that moment. I mean, this was the early 2000's and Liz Cole was the leader of the site, but the whole Women's Studies community was engaged, and everybody wanted that. They wanted it not to be 70's, White, straight, middle class feminists who were represented, that it would be feminists who had a bigger picture, different, more intersectional picture, even if they happened to be White and straight [laughs]. So I think I need more questions.

AR: Yeah sure, no problem! Basically I was just curious about the evolution of it and the fact that you're now kind of in another iteration –

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AS: Ah! So we grew like topsy. The four sites were there and then I was presenting with one of my graduate students at the International Society of Political Psychology, I think, and Shelly Grabe from UC Santa Cruz was on the same panel. I hadn't known her and we kind of were excited about each other and chatted a long time. Eventually it turns out she's from Michigan, so she came to visit and we kind of – she had a project going where she was going to interview Nicaraguan feminists for her own purposes and she said, "Would you like them to be a part of Global Feminisms?" and we were like, "Yeah, that would be great!"

So we worked out a plan and found little pieces of money that would make it happen; she found pieces also, significant pieces. So that was wonderful, and I never thought a psychologist would ever approach me to do that. It was kind of wonderful to have that happen, and she's published a book on it now, so very exciting. After that, we've had lots of people actually approach us to say "Would you like to do 'X'" and we've always said "Yes", whoever approached us. We don't have any money; we can try to help find money but, you know, we'll have to do it together. A lot of those just collapsed of their own weight. But Brazil happened, and that happened because Sueann Caulfield in our History department works in Brazil and is a feminist but hadn't really done feminist scholarship up 'til then, and got excited about interviewing these women and it's really made a difference in her own scholarship, she'd be the first to say. And Kristin McGuire my co-director through nearly the whole process, is also involved with Brazil for personal reasons, so she speaks Portuguese, and she became one of our translators. She speaks a lot of languages, so it became feasible to do it. Similarly, with Russia, we built a connection in history with Russian historian Valerie Kivelson and her former student, who is also a friend of Kristin's and mine, Rebecca Friedman, who's at Florida International University. So she facilitated a connection with a Russian scholar, a feminist scholar, who got very excited, and her son is a

documentarian, so this technology didn't intimidate her. The idea of videotape might have, because she's a historian of medieval Russia; it's not exactly video methodology [laughs]. So that happened very quickly. She did all the interviews herself, but we used the same protocol, you know, we used the same procedures. We annotated the interviews in English for American students by having American students do the annotating, so they look for "what don't I get, in these?"

Now, we don't have the same thing going on in all the other languages. When we started, our vision was totally that everything would be translated into every language, but we have not had the resources to do that, the cost is staggering. We had no idea what we were wishing for, in terms of cost. We wanted to decenter English. Our collaborators all said, "look, it's only educated people who are going to look at this, use these materials, they all speak English so stop obsessing about it and just get the website up" [laughs]. It was fascinating.

AR: I'm shaking my head because I have a lot of Brazilian colleagues and we talk a lot about the English imperialism that operates, and they're like, "You guys obsess over that."

AS: We don't!

AR: We don't, we want everyone to learn English because –

AS: That is exactly what we got educated about; we sort of learned to get over ourselves, like we're so guilty it's a waste of time. And getting the website out there is what they wanted, and it's out there in Portuguese in both the transcript and the video- but what we don't do is translate every other interview into Portuguese, and their attitude was, "don't worry about it."

AR: So has it accomplished what you had hoped from the beginning which –

AS: Not exactly.

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AR: [laughs] OK.

AS: I mean I've been stunned by the enduring investment in adding sites and the eagerness people have to do this work, to document local activists who are pushing important things that are not known widely. There is a huge desire for that and we are in negotiation with places right now. We don't have the money. We'll try to find it and see what pans out. What has not happened as much as I hoped is that it hasn't been understood or picked up as a teaching resource. I really thought, we had a closing conference in 2000 - closing a grant in 2006, roughly - and we held workshops on how to use it in intro to Women's Studies, and we did a lot of things internationally. A lot of people came, but I don't think those people are using it. A few of us here do, and we have it on the website: syllabi, assignments, resources for people to use it, but I don't think it's been picked up. That disappoints me, I have taught with it now for a while and my students are out there teaching with it and we all find it incredibly valuable to American students to have this very direct exposure to the diversity of feminist voices within a single country. The tendency to homogenize or exoticize feminists in other countries can be countered so easily by

using these materials and the students love it! They are so excited and inspired, so I feel it's way underused.

Just a note here (added January, 2021) We did get support for expanding the archive (a new grant) and we built more resources for teaching (timelines, upgraded the website, and developed lesson plans). So it continues to grow organically in terms of content and within UM more faculty are using it for teaching.

AR: Has it made its way into any textbooks? i.e. in terms of using it as in the ancillaries, like, here's how you could use this. I wonder.

AS: I don't know. That's actually a great idea, I'm so not focused on these kinds of issues. We need people thinking about that to get it out there. I had a few, about two years ago, I talked about some of the stuff we were doing with Sherry Ortner who's now just a friend. And she decided to watch the thematic videos, the first four sites made up the thematic videos, about a half hour each to introduce people to the website. And she came away asking, "why don't anthropologists know about this?" Well, because there wasn't one in the group, and so what we presented at the Berks because we had historians, and what we presented at NWSA [National Women's Studies Association]. Both places we've been to twice, so we have presented to them. But we haven't reached anthropologists, I've presented research using the site and we've tried to talk about teaching too in psych conferences but it just doesn't, it's not an easy fit for psychology.

AR: Yeah that's interesting. Mobilization is always hard. I'd like to talk more about that but we'll do it off tape, because I do want to. You mentioned using it in teaching and so this reminded me of a generic question we have about teaching and mentoring, so I thought maybe, I would take this opportunity to ask you a little bit about mentoring in your own career. Often we ask, did you have any mentors and if so how was that? You've talked a bit about David McClelland and his style, but also about your own role as a mentor and what role that has played in your own career.

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AS: So McClelland certainly was an important mentor. At BU, Clara Mayo was an important mentor. She took me under her wing, at least in my mind, and gave me lots of useful advice and I still miss her, she was big. Here, lots of people and I have felt mentored by peers as well as my older colleagues - Libby Douvan, she was one and there are many others. I mean, really, I feel I have been very lucky and had lots of mentors. Mentoring is perhaps the single most unambivalent pleasure in my work life. I love graduate students, I love undergraduate students, I love staying in touch with them, helping understand what they're trying to do and facilitating it when I can. They are of course the future and I feel like they are marvelous, what's going forward is wonderful.

AR: So you have been here for 30 years, so do you notice, and you've written also about generational issues, so what are your observations about how students have changed over the years?

AS: You know, in some ways I tend to think they change less than my colleagues often think. I mean, colleagues often comment, "these millennials are 'X'", but I rarely see that or feel it. I think I tend to be much more, and this is the personality psychologist maybe, I tend to be more individual in my seeing of students. They are so special and so unique, I don't tend to see them as - so for sure they're all on screens more than they used to be, they have a little less tolerance for the lecture format although they still have some kind of tolerance for it. But they still want to fix the world, they're still passionate, they still want to know what they don't know, they're still uncertain they have a contribution to make and they need to be supported. All those things feel more similar than different.

AR: What about attitudes towards feminism?

AS: Same, I feel like people have been worried about whether to be a feminist or say they're a feminist my whole life. The form of that doesn't change a lot either. You know the ones that are in Women's Studies have slightly different anxieties than ones who weren't, but it's only slightly different, it's pretty similar. Is this going to be stigmatizing, is there a cost to it, is there a gain to it? There's a little more of a - something that was unthinkable when I was young, could it be an advantage to be in Women's Studies and you know, as a career advantage. Not in a personal advantage, but a career advantage. That is kind of wonderful, I'm delighted people can imagine that and I think it's true. So yeah, I don't think it's changed as much as I might've thought. I'm shocked by how worried the world still is about feminism. You know, it feels ridiculous and old and silly but it's there. I mean, this is the progress-regress issue that we deal with in Women's Studies and feminist psychology, but yes, things are significantly and importantly better, and exactly the same [laughs].

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AR: Yeah, yeah exactly. Can I ask you to speak now about the ADVANCE grant? But more broadly about what it represents in terms of - and you've done a lot of work on women in STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics], so basically I want you to tell me a little bit about how you see these issues, and I'm especially curious because of the context here at Michigan with all the affirmative action stuff in the early 2000's and so on. It's not really a question, it's a big issue. So maybe a place to start would be, from where did your interest in women in STEM come from?

AS: OK, fair question. That was from being director of Women's Studies. So I later made a more natural, organic connection with my prior work, but it came from the following moment. At the time of the inauguration of Lane Hall as the home of Women's Studies in IRWG, the then-president Lee Bollinger in making small talk before the big keynote address said to me, "what's the next big thing in Women's Studies that we should be focused on?" And I said, "you know, maybe science, we have to really work out what is feminist science, is it a thing, how does it operate, what have feminism and science got to do with each other?" And he remembered that, I think, because when Chuck Vest at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], president of MIT at the time, sent out to his eight best friends a call to meet at MIT to talk about the situation of women and science, he said it was because the women at MIT told him to. He said bring three

senior women scientists with you. So the idea was to outnumber these nine male presidents with a bunch of women scientists, so he [President Bollinger] called me. And I was director of IRWG so that made some sense, but I didn't think of myself as a scientist, never have, though of course NSF (which funds ADVANCE) does, and so do many scientists, sort of [laughs].

So he brought me to that meeting along with two other women…real women scientists [laugh] and it was galvanizing. One of the things the institution was supposed to do was to commit itself to do something at home. So you were supposed to commit yourself at the meeting in this group of four, and the three of you [women scientists] were supposed to hold the presidents' feet to the fire. So it was very clear that those were the terms of engagement and our group committed to what I thought was nothing, which was: the president will sponsor a committee to look into the status of women in the scientists at Michigan. So holding his feet to the fire meant to name a committee. So we did that, and he did. I mean, he was committed to that. And by the moment of the first meeting, the ADVANCE call [for proposals] had come out and I don't think I had it, but someone at the meeting did, and said, "maybe we should apply for one of these." And everybody kind of looked around, like, "who's going to do the work," and they all nominated Abby. So this has happened multiple times in my career; I don't actually have a good *no* in those moments; I want it to happen -

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Ah! One other thing, before I went to MIT, I felt like such an imposter in that situation. I interviewed women scientists on campus, of whom there were precious few, about what the issues were. By then I knew, and actually I constantly said in that moment, so it's 2001 or 2000, I said to my colleagues in Women's Studies and in Psych, "it's 1970 for these women, it's 2000 and it's 1970 for what they're dealing with." I've heard all of what they're talking about, I've seen it, I experienced it, but it's no longer the day-to-day life I led. And so I felt terrible about that, what have I been doing?! I didn't even know about them! So I felt very bad about it; it really moved me. That's OK, there's a very real issue here that needs to be joined. So you know, engage that, be asked, there's a grant proposal opportunity, I'm the head of IRWG, it needs grants [laughs]. Right, it all comes together, so I write a proposal, not 100% sure, you know, it's very experimental, we don't know what we're doing. And Alice Hogan, who was the program officer at NSF [National Science Foundation], was really a phenomenal encourager of experimentation and a kind of eager cheerleader for what we tried to do. So once you had a grant, Alice was there 100%. So when we ran into situations where something we proposed didn't work out, she'd say, "don't do it, do something else, reallocate the money." it was fabulous! And when something worked, she jumped on that and would say, "we need you to come talk to NSF and spread the word that this works." Where "works" here is not held to the standard a psychologist would have, but we can see things are moving, something's changing. It was heady, and I felt passionately - this is actually an odd thing, I felt two things came together for me - traditional experimental psychology, and the mainstream stuff. The stuff I didn't do, but was *so* helpful. And so for the first time I was absolutely devoring mainstream experimental psychology for what it could help me do, and economics and sociology and everything, Organizational Studies. I was eager for leads. What would help here? How do I think about this

so we can intervene? It was a feminist project and at the same time it absolutely had this deep surprise that mainstream Psychology was so helpful.

AR: And helpful in the sense that it was able to answer questions that you needed-

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AS: Yes, that actually Women's Studies was also-- feminist theorizing was hugely helpful too. I gave a talk in Women's Studies about feminist theory the background, you know, I can't talk about this as a feminist theory, but I can use it to do what I'm doing and understand what I'm doing. So yes, both Women's Studies and psychology were intellectual resources that helped a lot. In addition, traditional experiments spoke to the scientists, so that was evidence they trusted. They actually were very surprised that psychologists had that kind of data [laughs]. They were shocked at how strong the evidence was, so some of the most well intentioned, good scientists - not just intentions, but values about women in their field - didn't actually have any idea about how to think about it. This research gave them, made them be able to be advocates in their own field and that was huge. This legal scholar, Susan Sturm, wrote about this concept, *organizational catalysts*. Her idea was that we mobilized a whole cadre of organizational catalysts in physics, in math, in biology who could speak to their own colleagues in a way that I couldn't, but they listened to me. So there was this remarkable ripple effect and it was deeply satisfying to me that psychology was this huge resource and my capacity to read it was useful, and not just psychology but all these other disciplines. And that I could find ways to know what's new in Econ both through colleagues and on my own. So yeah it was a huge satisfaction and Michigan institutionally, you mentioned there was this tradition of a commitment to diversity that had developed in the 90's through the 2000's and there was not just lip service. There was lots of commitment of resources, so when the NSF grant went away we were institutionalized as an independent unit. We are in the budget as an independent unit at the same or more budget level, so really that is a remarkable commitment and it's gone on now for more than 15 years. I think I was there at the right time, it all happened to come together, it was luck; but these moments are fantastic and looking back on it I can see how lucky I was. I don't think it's the same moment right now.

AR: Yeah, interesting. I was going to ask how you would reflect on the success of it or what it's done, I mean there are numbers I'm sure to-

AS: Yeah there are. So I think it has increased, there is a very stable increase in the rate at which women as scientists are hired. That has happened. I think it is at least partly attributable to ADVANCE and the institutionalization of STRIDE [Committee on Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Increase Diversity and Excellence] workshops, where faculty learn, you know, don't think fast, think slow; use deliberative processes that allow you to get past the halo effects that you are inevitably going to use if you think fast. It's not your fault. So, you know, lots of normalizing of what human beings do, but noticing that people in certain categories are seen as likely to be successful and people in other categories aren't. We tried to build in race and gender and handicapped status or ability status and social class, all of these concerns, as much as we could. But the biggest effect has been, as it always is, on White women. I live in hope that it will

continue to build around race and sexual orientation. I didn't mention, but it is also a part of what we try to intervene about, and I think successfully. For lots of science faculty, talking about sexual orientation was just odd, like, they just didn't think it was pertinent. Having a language to think why it's actually pertinent was helpful to them.

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So by the end of my directorship we had humanists on the committee, the STRIDE committee, and they were helping us use narratives, tell stories, think about other kinds of evidence. Which I had tried with qualitative research in the Social Sciences, but it got endlessly dismissed as anecdotes. So they [the science committee members] would try to listen, but they would say, "well, we can't really talk about that with our colleagues. I think it's important, but," so when the humanists came, they really - I think the scientists were cowed a little bit by the sense that these people had different expertise and they would say, "we are not interested in all those graphs, like, I don't care, it doesn't speak to me." They were like, "really?! What kind of person are you?" [laughs]. "So I wanna hear a story about how this happens on the ground," and that moved the scientists when they understood there's a different worldview here. So just that interdisciplinary thing, totally thrilling, I loved that. First it was social science and science, then it was humanists and social scientists, who clearly had a role in bridging. Especially historians are a great bridge. Historians always care about empirical things--what happened?-- but they also get that texts matter, so they're kind of wonderful bridge builders. And philosophers too; we have both really helpful philosophers and historians on the committee that help make the link.

AR: Yeah, amazing. So I'm going to change direction a bit now and go back to kind of your own biography, well, all this is your own biography, but looking at the time, you have published in lots of different topics. One theme and thread that we did talk about was the importance of life history and narrative development and so on, in women's lives. But at this point looking back on your career, what would you say, and it doesn't have to just be your research so this isn't just about research, but what would you say has been your most satisfying contribution?

AS: In a certain way, in the scholarship, ensuring space for certain kinds of work has been the most satisfying thing. So for example, and I know a lot of it isn't the most widely read, it wouldn't be a big deal in terms of metrics of impact but the JSI [*Journal of Social Issues*] issue on psychology and history that really mattered to me. It has mattered to me, *always*, and it was a great pleasure to me to create a space where scholars in psychology who think about history somehow could talk about it, because it's so hard to do that. So this isn't the History of Psychology, but the impact of history in Psychology-- not on the field, but on the people. So that was very, very, very satisfying to me. And many of the edited collections have been satisfying for similar reasons, making space for scholars; that has been perhaps the most, or kinds of scholarship, the most satisfying aspect of scholarship for me.

And then institution building has been important to me. I have wondered, in this moment, why, because they are so fragile. Everything now is under attack and some of it will go. So I look back at working on building Women's Studies, on IRWG, on ADVANCE, all of those are here and appear to be healthy but I am skeptical. I now feel differently than when I was throwing myself

into supporting their development, that building an institution in an institution is fragile work. History undoes itself a lot. So it was satisfying to me, I think in part because I love the process of it, I love the bringing people together, the kind of shared vision, the sense of passion, all of that is deeply satisfying to me. So I think I love the process; I am much more skeptical in this moment about outcome.

And the third thing is teaching and mentoring, which really can't be separated. I developed an undergrad course this year on promoting equity and inclusion in the academy and the workplace, it was like taking ADVANCE and giving it to the students and it's *so* much fun. The global feminisms class I teach, which is called the Psychology of Social Change and is cross-listed in Psych and Women's Studies - creating these was to me-- and reaching students who want what I know or think about-- it's really satisfying. And the joint doctoral program produced a whole cadre of students for me that were that, you know, where I feel they are out there in the world doing fantastic things and not exactly what I did, but that's exactly what they should be doing, they're doing what fits them and their setting. So those are the big gratifications if I look back on my career, and that's a lot. I feel incredibly lucky that I have had those things.

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AR: Can you tell me a little bit how you navigate personal and professional? Your spouse is an academic too, a psychologist, so how does that work in terms of your careers?

AS: Right, I *chose* work not to have boundaries [laughs]. So we are always talking about work because that's one of the things we do. We talk about lots of things too, we both love music, we both love movies, we love books, we're in a book group together and I'm in one by myself, we both have politics we care passionately about, there's a lot else going on, but the boundary between personal and professional is pretty permeable. And we have two children who are both academics. One's a political scientist who's a political psychologist, one's a gender historian, gender and sexuality. They're fabulous. So our family life is intellectual engagement with politics and academia. It's kind of all everywhere. And you know, I had children, my older son is a stepson but he lived with us from when he was 6, and then I have a second son. I have always loved being a parent. We are very co-parents, it's been… equal is wrong because we have very different relationship with our kids, but we've always both done a lot and I never felt oppressed and never was oppressed -

AR: Did you have any trouble moving together?

AS: Oh sure! For 13 years we were commuting, I was at BU and he was at Wesleyan so that was a lot of difficulty. Nick, my stepson, was with me, and then we had Tim, and all of that happened while we were commuting, so it was complicated and it wasn't easy but we learned a lot about how to do it and managed it and when we, when I had the offer here it was clear, I didn't think I should take it if there wasn't a position for David, but it was before that was a normal thing to be doing. Women's Studies had already lost people whose partners hadn't been placed, so Women's Studies was totally on it, and raised it with Psychology. David said, "I'll fly rather than drive; what difference does it make? I'll just stay at Wesleyan, it's no problem." So he was willing. But Michigan offered him a visiting position right away, we both came with the kids and then by

January they had offered him a permanent position. So we were always looking for that, but we hadn't found it, and it wasn't easy to find. This was random. I mean, very big department, institution that's capable of making another position. Lots of things that came together were just luck.

AR: OK! And so another kind of, well, this is more of a big picture question as we kind of wrap up a little bit. When you look at the state of feminist psychology now, where do you think we're at? I guess one way to think about it is what has been accomplished, but what remains to be done?

AS: Yeah, a lot! So a lot has been accomplished and it's been rehearsed in some very good papers and, other papers [laughs]. So I think a lot has happened, I think your paper about *is, and,* and *of* gives us a wonderful way of thinking about it. I think that it exists, that it's a category, is a huge accomplishment in and of itself. I did an article with a graduate student on feminist psych for *Signs* [Journal of Women in Culture and Society], so that mattered to me that it was in *Signs* -

AR: - that was a huge article.

AS: - that psychology had something to offer Women's Studies, I tried a lot to convince psychology that Women's Studies had something to offer *it,* but the reverse is also true and was harder for me to make that case. The student, Andrea Dottolo, was very helpful in helping me think that that's a story to tell. So where are we? I think we are very imperfectly institutionalized within psychology, so yes, we have a division and a journal and so on, but I think we're pretty marginal within the field of psychology. And if you look at departments, you won't find a feminist psychologist in that many departments. So nobody thinks they need one, including this one! So we made a big push to have an area, Gender and Feminist Psychology. We created an undergraduate curriculum to go with the joint doctoral program. We did a lot of pressing on the department and it's still incomplete. So we are not quite an area, we are *like* an area [laughs]. Why aren't we quite an area? Well, we've been told we can't hire, so anyone we hire has to be in some other area and to us, it's again that battle for legitimacy, now within psychology. So we've moved from the university where Women's Studies was fighting for that, to within the department. That's a big move, and you know there's nowhere else that's got it, even this, institution wise within psychology. In sociology, gender areas are common, so we are behind, we're always behind. Behind certain fields and ahead of others.

AR: My sense too, and I'm not exactly sure where this one comes from, talking to people, being involved in the field. That psychology, although it had a presence in the formation of many Women's Studies programs, has also been in retreat from Women's Studies for a long time.

AS: I agree! Yes! So psychology had many gender psychologists have a narrative of, "they don't want me, they're all these humanists," and I think too often those are people who refuse to read feminist theory cuz it's too hard, it's not helpful. How do they know it's not helpful if they haven't read it? It is helpful even if you don't take it on board whole lock stock and barrel. It changes how you think about things because it's an intellectual resource, surely we all need them. So I agree with you, I think not only psychology is in retreat from it but gender psychologists are in retreat from it. They're happy to say they (women's studies people) don't

want us, at least some, I don't mean all, at all! Certainly there are plenty who identify as feminist psychologists, but there is a visible presence of a perspective that it's a relief we don't have to think about Women's Studies and I think that's a problem. It keeps psychology "protected" from feminism.

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AR: Yeah that's an interesting way to put it [laughs]. Well I am conscious of time so I just have one more question, and that is, is there anything I haven't asked you about that you feel you'd really like us to have a part of this interview?

AS: [laughs] I guess, maybe. It's not that you didn't ask it but the one thing I'd like to say is that these young scholars, it's what they do that matters, and I think they are going to do big things. They aren't going to let psychology off the hook, they are going to continue to be feminist psychologists and raise issues in their own way. Whether it's inside psychology or jointly with Women's Studies, I have a lot of confidence that it's not over. But it is a different moment and I'm *most* encouraged by them.

AR: Any advice to them as they kind of make their way?

AS: Just keep doin' it. You just have to keep doing it. I mean, the most important thing is to find allies and support. To find ways to do what you want to do, not to give up on what you want to do. I feel so astonished that at this age I can look back and say I did do what I wanted to do. I didn't expect that. In those early days it felt like I was a square peg in a round hole, that it was going to be forever, that it was going to be uncomfortable, maybe that I'd stop. And there came a moment here in Michigan when I realized, huh, I kind of have a niche and it's OK to be me. That'll happen! So hold on, whatever terrible moment you have, hold on to who you are and you'll be OK. Keep doin' it!

AR: Sounds like a good place to end!

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