



**Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project
Interview with Annadís Rúdólfsdóttir**

*Interviewed by Lois Donnelly over Zoom™
June 17, 2022*

When citing this interview, please use the following citation:

Rúdólfsdóttir, A. (2022, June 17). Interview by L. Donnelly [Video Recording]. Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History and Online Archive Project.

This interview was collected for the The History of POWES and Feminist Psychology in the UK Project, which was funded by the British Psychological Society.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.

This video has been licensed by the interviewee.

For permission to use this interview in published work, please contact:

Alexandra Rutherford, PhD
Project Director, Psychology's Feminist Voices alexr@yorku.ca

Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Annadís Rúdólfsdóttir

Interviewed by Lois Donnelly

Conducted over the Zoom online platform

June 17, 2022

Lois: I'm Lois Donnelly interviewing Professor Annadís Rúdólfsdóttir on 17th June 2022 over Zoom. And we're –

Annadís: Associate Professor unfortunately.

Lois: Yes. And we're discussing their life and career in the context of feminism and its history within psychology.

So, first of all then, could you tell me a little bit just about yourself and maybe a bit in terms of your career and the topics of your work, that type of thing.

Annadís: Yes. Well, I live in Iceland currently. I did my undergraduate degree at the University of Iceland. The focus was very positivist and mainstream and feminism considered to be politics. So, I didn't realise that was an issue, even though I was a feminist I thought feminism was something separate from psychology. And then I went to England to do my Master's. So, I did my Masters in England in 1989 to 90. I went back and then came back after a year to do my PhD, again at the London School of Economics. Then moved back in 96 to Iceland where I took part in setting up the first sort of gender studies, well, it was called women's studies then, so it was like, you know, a trajectory you could take. And then moved back to England in 1999 and lived there until 2009 when I moved back to Iceland to form and set up a programme called the Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme, which was like a cooperative project between the University of Iceland and the foreign ministry. So, preparing education for students from Africa, from Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and from Afghanistan. So that was great fun to set up the study programme.

And then I left there after five years to work for the faculty of education and I'm still there, but thankfully, thanks to the internet, I've managed to hold onto my network of feminist friends in the UK. So, quite sort of to and fro history of being in academia and practising feminist work.

Lois: Yeah, that's really interesting. So, nice kind of, yeah, between Iceland and England?

Annadís: Yes.

Lois: Yeah. That's great.

Annadís: Yeah, so I lived in England between 99 and 2009, I had my two sons. I taught one year at the London School of Economics. I was filling in for women who went on maternity leave, so of course I got pregnant too, just to empathise with them. And then I got a part-time position at the University of the West of England and met there a great many feminists and also learned to really properly appreciate qualitative research methods, so that was a very valuable time for me, so I worked there until I moved to Iceland after my divorce and all of that. I've moved back with my two little boys.

Lois: Oh nice. So, who were the kind of key maybe feminist psychologists that you met around that time then? Were there any kind of key people that you can remember?

Annadís: When I went to University of West of England?

Lois: Hmm.

Annadís: Well, there was of course Kate Gleeson. She was working there, and she was like my boss. And it's just great feminist, not only in the work that she does, but also in the way she relates to other people. So, the kind of person who sort of facilitates. And I started working there pregnant and I was extremely ill for my first year and my teaching was very substandard I'm afraid. (Laughter) I found some of my notes like afterwards and go, "What was that?" But she was very kind and sort of made sure that I was resting and so on. Of course, it wasn't my fault, then as soon as I gave birth to my son, I was fine. But, yeah.

[0:05:32]

So, she was like the first person I met there. But then there was also Hannah Frith. She was also working there and her and Kate Gleeson were great friends.

And then later Helen Malson joined UWE and we became good friends. And Victoria Clarke.

Lois: Ah yeah.

Annadís: Yeah. And we shared an office, me and Victoria Clarke and I learned a great deal about all kinds of things that I had no idea about because she was teaching, what was it called? Critical sexualities. So, she got me into reading, being like a second pair of eyes in terms of marking and so on. And all kinds of concepts that I had never read before. And we shared an office, but she was writing this phenomenal article on thematic analysis.

Lois: Ah yes!

Annadís: Yeah. That was so incredibly vital. It always cheers me up when I look at how many people have cited it there they are, Ginny and Victoria with their article on thematic analysis.

Lois: Yeah.

Annadís: And absolutely, well, what would you say? Mind-blowing. Really.

Lois: Yeah, it's amazing. Yeah, huge amounts.

Annadís: Yeah.

Lois: So, was that network quite important to you at that time?

Annadís: Yes. That was very important for me when I was working there, and sort of found like-minded people. I was commuting from London, so unfortunately, I couldn't socialise as much with people as I would have wanted. I was always trying to keep my time as brief as I possibly could. It was quite hard commuting with two small kids. But, you know, I built very warm friendships that formed there and collaborations that started there and also just learning new things. We were talking a lot about qualitative research methods, and I'd never really thought about it until I was there. And it was actually Helen Malson that sort of brought me into POWES [Psychology of Women and Equalities Section of the British Psychological Society]. She suggested that I should take a seat on the governing board, not the...

Lois: Committee?

Annadís: Committee, yeah. So, I did. And then I met a whole lot of other people that I really value and I'm still in contact with today.

Lois: Yeah, lovely.

Annadís: Yeah.

Lois: No, that is. All right, well, we'll come back to POWES in a minute and talk about that in a bit more depth. First of all, I want to maybe rewind a little bit and ask you what first attracted you to psychology and the field?

Annadís: Well, actually I had no idea what I wanted to study. I was 20 and I basically sort of went through the list of topics I could study and just sort of erased the ones that I didn't want to do. There were two left, psychology and sociology, so it was basically like tossing a coin, and I went into psychology. But I ended up doing a PhD in social psychology. So, the two got brought together.

[0:09:28]

So, I had no idea what I was going into. Yeah. And the psychology, of course, that I learned during my undergraduate degree, it was very sort of mainstream, very sort of discovering the truth with the right instruments and all of that. So, yeah, that was interesting.

Lois: Yeah, and so, when did that change? When did you start learning maybe beyond those kind of mainstream things?

Annadís: I did a Master's course at the London School of Economics. That was in 89/90. And I don't think it was as mind-blowing for anyone except me when I just realised that what I had learned was a perspective, not the truth, it's not sort of... it was one perspective of a number of perspectives. And my world just sort of became so much bigger. I realised that during my Master's programme.

And then I was just quite lucky. I did a research project on the Miss Iceland contest. Yeah, it was a big thing in Iceland because Iceland is tiny, it's only like 360,000 people here. And we'd had two Miss Worlds. So, we were sort of entangled in all kinds of nationalist ideology, so it was a really just interesting phenomena. So, I decided to do a research project of the social representation of the Miss Iceland contest. And my supervisor was really into it. And he got to me to read, you know, I was reading Shulamith Firestone all of a sudden and all kinds of sort of feminist texts. I was also introduced to semiotics as a research method. And, of course, approaching it from the theory of social representation which was quite different from the kind of theories I'd been acquainted to previously. It was finding like cause/effect, but there you're more like looking at ideologies and how things are constructed then the meaning on the surface and then the meaning underneath.

And so that was sort of my first entry into real feminist critical psychology. And I did this huge project because I've never done qualitative research methods before, so I was very worried. I was so nervous that I was doing it all wrong, but I collected so much data. I interviewed so many beauty queens and did a small survey. I was analysing videos and media discussion and God knows what. But I ended up with this project and I got the highest mark in the department.

Lois: Amazing.

Annadís: They were very pleased. I got an 80 for the dissertation which was huge then. And both from my supervisor and then also from a professor in the department. They both gave me this high mark. So that was sort of validation that what I was doing that I was so nervous about that it was acceptable. And, yeah, so...

And then also because I'd done that work, I then wrote an article in one of the, because at the time there weren't that many media outlets, but there was like one huge one that actually played a big part in publicising the Miss Iceland contest and making it like a national sort of project. But they agreed to publish a huge article that I wrote about my thesis. So that was a bit of a sort of a knock into the, you know, so I had a bit of an impact in Iceland. Thankfully the internet was not alive then. So, I was not like torn apart. But, yes, so that was really powerful for me.

Lois: Yeah, quite a big moment then.

Annadís: Yeah, yeah. So that was how I got into Feminism. And then you'll get into, you know, you get this validation, get a good grade, and people interested in what I'm saying. So, you continue. So, all of the research I've done since then, it's been qualitative, and it's been really feminist and quite gender oriented.

[0:15:07]

Lois: Yeah, interesting. So, did your broader feminist identity also start to develop at that same time, or were you thinking about those concepts before then and this was just when it interacted with your work or...?

Annadís: Yes. Yes. I mean before my Master's degree, I saw feminism has something that should not be part of psychology because psychology was science and feminism was politics; and then I started to see the politics in psychology and why we needed like a feminist analysis of that. And research that took sort of a feminist standpoint. So that's when that started developing.

And then there was no turning back, the ball started rolling.

Lois: Yeah, that's really interesting. So, would you have counted yourself as a feminist before you started the work?

Annadís: Oh, I thought I was a feminist.

(Laughter)

You know, I voted for the Women's Alliance in the elections, the Women's Party, and all of that. So, in my sort of social life, everything, you know, it was quite feminist. But I didn't see, because I had I had a sort of very narrow way of looking at things in terms of psychology, I didn't see and I thought that just with the tools of psychology, I would just find the truth. And if I didn't find the truth, it was just something wrong with the tools. But I didn't see how psychology took a part in creating all kinds of truths that are harmful for women. So, that's when I started doing that and became a bit of a rebel.

(Laughter)

Lois: Brilliant. Yeah. Okay, so talking a bit more about your specific pieces of work then, is there anything, any particular accomplishment that you're most proud of?

Annadís: Oh. I don't know. I'm always proudest of the last project I've been part of. There's nothing like in particular. I mean there was a pretty good sort of entry into sort of in joining the two together sort of in terms of having an impact on public discussion. But I never like published anything about my work in an academic journal. It's a shame, I should have. I should have been encouraged to do that.

Oh, I can't really pinpoint anything in particular. I mean it's like what's your favourite child?

(Laughter)

Lois: Yeah, it is a bit, you're right.

Annadís: Yeah. I love them all. (Laughter)

Lois: Well, you do quite a lot of work around discourses and discursive framing. Do you want to tell me a bit about kind of those methods of analyses and what got you interested in that kind of work?

Annadís: Yeah. Well, when I was doing my PhD, I didn't quite know what I was doing. I started off with some kind of vague idea of doing social representations. But then I was just really interested in power relations and there were people at my department, I don't remember who was talking about it. I mean one of the students who studied with me is the wife of Nikolas Rose. Yeah. So, there was a bit of discussion about discourse analysis. But none of the books had been published. I mean Ian

Parker hadn't published his books. There was nothing on the Foucauldian discourse analysis. Potter and Wetherell's book was out.

[0:19:48]

So, I had to find my way through that, and Foucault of course is quite a read. So, I was reading a lot of the sort of feminist sort of articles discussing his ideas and somehow managed to add that to what I was doing. And then found it really hard to explain to anyone what's my method, there was a clear method, and I was very methodical and, as always, very nervous that I was misrepresenting things and so on.

Yeah, but I got sort of introduced to the idea of discourse during my PhD, and more specifically Foucauldian discourse analysis. And then actually, and that's sort of like a standout moment, you know, something happens where you just sort of, a light bulb moment when Nikolas Rose came and gave a lecture based on his book *Governing the Soul*. And you listen to that and just everything's changed, the way you see things afterwards. I've often talked about this, me and some other colleagues who attended that seminar. It was quite mind-blowing.

And, of course, at the same time they were publishing the book, *Changing the Subject* with Walkerdine and Hollway and a lot of really good scholars. And that was a really useful book that sort of changed how we thought about things. You could say those books sort of at the same time I was thinking that was that book, *Changing the Subject*, it was Nikolas Rose's book, and, yeah, there were some others, but yeah, that's sort of what comes to mind at this moment.

Lois: Yeah. Yeah, great. And can you remember your maybe first project using those new methods that you were a bit nervous about?

Annadís: That was my PhD. Yeah, actually I analysed obituaries that had been published in Iceland, because in Iceland people write obituaries not only about celebrities or people in high status positions, but about all kinds of people. So, you might find an obituary about a lorry driver or whatever. So, I took like a sample from 1922 to 1992 and looked at changes in how femininity and of course, because I was sort of with femininity, also masculinity were constructed in those obituaries. And I also conducted interviews with women, different age ranges. So, looking at their different ideas and looking at sort of generational tensions in terms of women's duties and what women should aspire to and what was proper and healthy and good and all of that.

So, that framework, the discourse analytic framework, was very, very useful for unpicking that, because of course, you know, it used to be the case with older women that they should just dedicate themselves to the family, they shouldn't have any real self, it was to be in the shadow of everyone else, and that changes them when there is big emphasis you have to choose things and develop yourselves to become the best that you can be.

So, I sort of managed to sort of get into that a bit with my project.

Lois: Yeah, that sounds really...

Annadís: So, that was my first foray into that area.

Lois: Yeah, really interesting project.

Annadís: Yeah, it was fun. Yeah.

Lois: (Laughter) Yeah. And so, I was just wondering, because you were saying that you were nervous when you were starting these new qualitative methods that were all a bit new to you. But that didn't stop you or discourage you from trying?

[0:24:35]

- Annadís: No. No, thankfully I was encouraged but I have to say because I did my, you know, and I did this Master's at LSE, which was very good for me. But all the methodology training was quantitative. There was no training and using qualitative research methods. It was all sort of, it was part of why I was so nervous about using it. That has changed now, thankfully. They are still not teaching qualitative research methods in psychology here at the University of Iceland. Would you believe it?
- Lois: Wow!
- (Laughter)
- Annadís: But they don't. And I tell them every time I meet them. What's the matter with you?
- (Laughter)
- But, yes, so that was part of why I was so nervous. And also using Foucauldian discourse analysis. And there was no Carla Willig saying do this and this and this. Or Braun and Clarke to say this and this and that. You think about that. So, I really had to find my own way. So, yeah. But, you know, I was supported by my supervisor. He actually, he learned all about Foucauldian discourse analysis through me. He got really interested in it himself. He started using it. So...
- Lois: Oh good.
- Annadís: Yeah. Yeah.
- Lois: Learning from each other.
- Annadís: Yes, I have good PhD students like that too. I'm always learning something from them.
- Lois: Brilliant. And so, throughout your time I suppose and even now, did you have any key mentors that you think through your career?
- Annadís: Oh God. Not really. Not really. It was a key thing, Patrick Humphreys, who was my supervisor when I was suddenly going from Skinner and God knows what and reading Shulamith Firestone. (Laughter) I was, you know, and reading about semiotics. That was quite something. And I thank him for helping me making that choice. And Kate was also, she was very important when I was working at the UWE. I mean she's just the sort of warm, no nonsense person. So that was wonderful. But no there weren't that many, you know, it's funny because I experienced LSE as such a revolution and then realised how actually conventional it is. It is really sort of conventional in many ways. It's becoming like that again, it's becoming quite mainstream unfortunately.
- So, yeah, I don't think there's any particular person who sort of mentored me through it. It was more like finding like-minded people and we were just plodding along, all of us. There was Hélène Joffe, she's a professor at the UCL. We were great friends. And I always had those ideas that I could like discuss my ideas with –
- Lois: Yeah,
- Annadís: - and my best friend, she did her master's with me at, she went into a completely different direction, she's doing clinical psychology, but she was also someone who I could talk about these things a lot, and other friends from that programme. Yeah, I was just really lucky in terms of who were my co-students also.
- Lois: It's important to have a good peer group, isn't it, to...
- [0:28:49]
- Annadís: Yeah, oh God, yes, yes. And, you know, the debates and it was fantastic.
- Lois: Yeah. And so –

Annadís: I mean from this sort of I know what is the truth to hope, you know?

Lois: Yeah. (Laughter) Yeah, that's so true, and it's so interesting what you're saying about, yeah, that it was all very revolutionary for you but also once you actually got into it, maybe wasn't as, was still fairly conservative.

Annadís: It was, yes, yes.

Lois: Yeah. Okay. Brilliant. So, do you want to tell me a little bit about any projects that you've been doing recently? Any pieces of work?

Annadís: Ooh, I've just... I'm just completing a whole year sabbatical. It seems to have mostly revolved around sort of all kinds of articles that I'd started that I'm finishing. There's no like any big project that I've been working on. But it's like, so... and a lot of it like writing with my PhD students. So, I was like writing with my PhD student, Katrín Ólafsdóttir, we just got an article published in *Feminism and Psychology* yesterday.

Lois: Oh exciting!

Annadís: Yes. So, based on her interviews with men who have committed violence, intimate partner violence, and analysing those. So that was really difficult. But fantastic and she is just a fantastic student and so it was great doing that.

And then what I've been doing, actually something that comes up again and again in my work actually is doing work on motherhood.

Lois: Ooh yes.

Annadís: Yes. So, I've been looking sort of at constructions of femininity but I'm really interested in sort of discourses of motherhood, and that's one of the things I did actually during my sabbatical, because I want to look, there's so much to talk about, like discourses of motherhood in the UK and the US, in the Western world. But there hasn't been much sort of concerted research looking at more Nordic discourses because we have this welfare system that supports women in working outside the home, and so we had this idea, you know, all these ideas about shared parenting and so on in the Nordic countries, but then it's been infiltrated by the sort of intensive motherhood ideas and it hasn't, you know, there's been great research here and there, but those of us who are doing this work in separate Nordic countries, we need to talk together.

And so, I sent in an application for workshops with people in all of the different Nordic countries, Iceland, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway, and hopefully we managed to get something going with that.

And I also, yeah, also the part in this major research proposal that was funded looking at people's decisions regarding having children or not. So, I'm working on that with colleagues. That's also something that's starting. But previously like I've done research on young mothers and that was like in the late, late last century. And it was the first article I got published in *Feminism and Psychology* it was.

[0:33:15]

Lois: Oh, was it? What was that about?

Annadís: It was about, you know, it was about the sort of institutional discourses, basically about motherhood as an institution and then the experience of being pregnant and giving birth and looking at all the stuff that the young mothers got in terms of education. So, I analysed that using discourse analysis of course.

And then talked to them about their experiences and sort of contrasted all of that. There was a lot of, "I'm not a patient, I'm not a child," I think it was the first. So that was my first article on this topic and in an academic journal. I've published in other places.

Lois: That's exciting.

Annadís: Yeah, yeah. So, that seems to be always something that comes again and again, looking at motherhood.

Lois: Yeah. And do you look at parenthood maybe in the pandemic or family...?

Annadís: I did, yes. Without another marvellous PhD student Auður who is now my co-worker. She just got a position.

Lois: Ooh brilliant.

Annadís: And we continue working together. We are working on an article based on our analysis of the media where they interview women who are mothers. And looking at different time periods. So, yeah, we looked at, we also used the story completion methods to look at parenthood during covid, and looking at how, yeah, there was a lot of frustration in that data regarding the father's part and shouldering some of the responsibility in terms of looking after the home and the children. And basically, taking on the third shift, as we call it.

So, it's becoming really interesting because now I'm sort of moving from discourse analysis and taking sort of looking more at how the affective works with the discursive. So that's how I've been moving and that's something I've been inspired to do by the feminist literature. Sara Ahmed and (inaudible 0:35:56) and all of those wonderful writers.

Lois: That's really nice, yeah, so constantly developing I suppose.

Annadís: Yes, yes. Yeah. You sometimes look at some old stuff you've done and you're, "Oh, oh I didn't think about that," you know?

Lois: Yeah.

Annadís: Like I hardly thought about class when I was first doing my research. It was just gender. And then through getting to know my colleagues who were interested in class and so on you start thinking about, "Oh". Also, I listened also to Beverley Skeggs who was also one of those mind-blowing lectures. And only then started to think about class in Iceland because supposedly we were not supposed to have, it's a classless society.

(Laughter)

[0:36:49]

Lois: I see, so do you start, yeah, bringing that into your work and stuff? I suppose –

Annadís: Yes.

Lois: - intersectional lens, I suppose?

Annadís: Yeah, I'm taking a more intersectional lens now, and inspired to do so by my colleagues also who have been using that. And looking more at how we get affectively pulled in discourses.

Lois: Yes.

Annadís: Hailed by particular discourses and why we can't move from certain positions and so on. So that's sort of where I'm at now.

- Lois: That's interesting.
- Annadís: Honestly. Yeah. And, you know, working with, as I say, working with wonderful people.
- Lois: Yeah.
- Annadís: I decided maybe a year ago, I said, you know, "I'm never going to write an article all by myself again".
- Lois: Oh really?
- Annadís: Yeah.
- Lois: Why did you decide that?
- Annadís: Because you get so much stimulation out of collaborating with others. It's so much more fun. And the work is better. I like being challenged because then I learn more. So, I think, "Why did I think that?" you know? Oh.
- So, yeah, that was one of – I think it's quite a feminist position and now published, because there's so much emphasis, they're always like this sort of hierarchies in the academic world, so like I published an article with a colleague and we sort of put down we are joint first authors.
- Lois: Ah yeah. That's nice.
- Annadís: So, I've been doing that with some work that hasn't been published. But yeah.
- Lois: Yeah, that's a really nice idea instead of playing into those hierarchies I suppose.
- Annadís: Oh yeah, yeah. And especially when you're working in, when you have a good collaboration, it's really hard to see where one person's thought begins and where the other one's come into it. It's basically often impossible.
- Lois: Yeah. Yeah. And so do you think that's your feminist values coming into how you do the work and not just the work itself but how you do it as well.
- Annadís: Yes. Yes. I think it's important to... I think it's important to be aware of all power balances also. So, yeah, thinking about the hierarchies that we are being pushed into and also just power relations, also in terms of working with students and so on. I think feminism has played a big part in that. And I've benefited from a lot of discussions, for example, with my friends at POWES. We talked a lot about student/supervisor relationships and things like that. And it sort of made me think, really does.
- [0:40:27]
- Lois: Yeah. Are there any specific things that you do, Specific ways that it impacts how you do the work do you think?
- Annadís: Yeah, I just always think... I never think of the students as working for me or under me or something like that. I've heard stories of supervisors who think it's quite fine to almost like send the PhD students to do their photocopies for them and all of that. So, I wouldn't do things like that.
- Lois: Yeah.
- Annadís: I try to be careful and keep it, always think about it.
- Lois: Yeah, that makes sense.
- Annadís: Yeah.

Lois: Great, well, talking about POWES then, I suppose we can move onto that, switch gears a little bit, into there. So, do you want to tell me a bit about your involvement with POWES?

Annadís: Yes. I think my first conference, I didn't know anyone except Rose Capdevila. I had met Rose at a summer school in 1990... oh, when was it? 1996 in Finland where we just sort of found each other and liked each other and found this map of Helsinki which listed one to ten things to do in Helsinki. So, we had this map and we walked to all the places and then we ticked them off. And we became good friends. And we're still good friends. So, she was the only person I knew there, but yeah, so I went there, and it wasn't quite as my, I don't think POWES had quite formed into what it then later became. I can't... I'm trying to remember what year it was, whether it was 99 or something.

And then I went later, had great fun again. That was in Birmingham. And listened to some really interesting presentations. And I think actually at this first conference I went into, you may have heard that there was this conference where you had, there was this symposium or seminar on porn. And it was just so uncomfortable because you had people there, totally disagreeing and then people being very upset and crying and, yeah, so that was really hard. And I've often thought about that.

Lois: Yeah.

Annadís: So, people... it seems to be somehow we didn't find a way there to talk about difficult topics except going into those trenches. So, they were like people in trenches trying to talk together. And, you know, and wasn't really, didn't know much about those debates or whatever. But I was just flabbergasted basically. It was strange.

Lois: Yeah.

Annadís: And, yeah. But this sort of really supportive, lovely emotional space that POWES has become is something that has evolved. And it's becoming more and more so, and I really felt it because I hadn't been for a few years because I moved to Iceland because I took on this... I was working for this programme, the UNU-GEST programme that I told you about where I was working with people from different countries. It made me look at my privileges as a white woman which I never thought about before that.

But after that I went to the POWES, I think it was 2010 or 11 or something like that. And I just, you know, it was later. It was in 15 maybe. I can't remember. But I just remember just walking in there and just it was like walking into this sort of warm embrace. And then, you know, there's so many good presentations, good symposiums, and what I really appreciated was what seemed to be you had like all the respected feminist presenters there who you could say a bit of rock stars in our world.

[0:45:54]

But then totally didn't behave like that and were so open and it was also a fantastic, you saw that, a sort of fantastic space for PhD students. And I've been there later with PhD students and that's what they all talk about. They all want to go.

(Laughter)

So now everyone's going to POWES except me. This year that is. You know, I'm going next year totally.

Lois: Good, good. Yeah.

Annadís: But it was like I walked in and the first person I met was like Marsha. It was, you know, the big hug and it was... I thought she set the tone for the rest of the conference.

Lois: Yeah, absolutely.

Annadís: A lot of exchanges, but also lots of fun. Incredible dancing during the disco and costumes and deep discussions and some dedicated drinking.

(Laughter)

Lois: Always necessary.

Annadís: I was very popular, I can tell you, because I had all those Alka Seltzer tablets with me.

Lois: (Laughter) Clever.

Annadís: Yeah, very clever. Yeah, so basically, yeah, it's been very important. In Iceland I feel very much alone as a critical social psychologist, so I feel very much alone in terms of psychology but have a fantastic network of co-workers who come from other directions but are doing similar things to me. So, it doesn't seem to matter. But I have very little connection with the psychology department, and I just don't think I would ever feel at home there now.

Lois: Is that because they're more mainstream?

Annadís: Very, very mainstream and, you know, yeah, just totally thinking inside the box, sort of this view here with a rectangle. You know, absolutely lovely people, but I don't see myself sort of working a lot with them but, you know, maybe that will happen. I don't know.

But then it was so important for me to have this home with POWES and at the conference and meet women coming from similar backgrounds in terms of academia as me.

Lois: Yeah. Yeah.

Annadís: And reading similar kind of things.

Lois: So that network makes up for maybe not having one in Iceland?

Annadís: Yeah, not having one in terms of psychology, but I mean I do have really supportive, fantastic people around me here and I work with people in sociology, I work with people from the educational side, it's in pedagogy, and because you work with a psychologist because sometimes they have, there have been some PhD students who are you saying quantitative methods, but also using qualitative methods, and then they asked me to come in to their committees. So, I can help them with their thematic analysis, all of that, themes do not emerge and all of that. And try to somehow bring that into their way of thinking.

And, you know, also whenever I know there's someone coming to Iceland, like that has like the sort of critical feminist background, try and make sure that they're introduced to the University of Iceland and, yeah. So, like Lindsay O'Dell, she's now a guest professor at our department. I can't take any credit for that, that was my colleague who went with me, when she was then a PhD student, when to POWES so that's how she got to know about Lindsay O'Dell. And various people like Rebecca Lawson being co-supervisor with one of my PhD students. And then I was part of this project that Lisa Lazard was leading. Looking at sort of digital meetings and gender relations within those digital meetings. So, it involves different countries and Lisa, all the honour goes to her for writing that wonderful application. But we got the funding, so it's really nice, this kind of collaboration with like-minded people between different countries. And also, incredibly clever and wonderful.

Lois: Yeah, making those connections?

Annadís: So, yes, it's all those little linkages here and there that we managed to make. And now I have all these linkages with the UK. So now I'm trying to connect more to the Nordic countries, so through this application, looking at Nordic parenthood I got to know really interesting researchers in different Nordic countries. I'm hoping something will come of that.

Lois: Yeah, that would be brilliant.

Annadís: Yeah.

- Lois: Great, so are there any other feminist organisations that you're a part of, similar to POWES or...?
- Annadís: Well, nothing similar to POWES, no. Not really. Not really. You know, I'm sort of maybe part of sort of smaller projects, but nothing like POWES with conferences and so on.
- Lois: Yeah, okay.
- Annadís: Yeah.
- Lois: Lovely. And so, thinking about POWES then, yeah, I was going to ask about the first conference you were at then. So, was that a difficult time?
- Annadís: Yes.
- Lois: Was that like a one-off?
- Annadís: Yeah, I didn't know, and I didn't know anyone except Rose, and I gave a presentation, and I don't think it was particularly mind-blowing either. But there were really interesting presentations, I remember Chris Griffin giving a wonderful paper and then there was this seminar that was just hard.
- Lois: Yeah. Did that put you off going again or...?
- Annadís: No. Well, I didn't go for a while, mostly because I only knew Rose at that time. So, I knew like POWES, but I wasn't really part of it. But I didn't really, yeah, I didn't really become a full part of it until I started working at UWE. And Helen Malson got me into the committee, and I got to know Marsha and Erica Burman and Bridgette and all of those wonderful women who also come to Iceland, visited Iceland, at least once we had like a writing retreat which was fantastic.
- [0:54:27]
- Lois: Very nice.
- Annadís: Yeah. Hopefully we'll repeat that. So... yeah. I didn't really become part of POWES until later. Yeah, but my first experience was this particular conference. I can't remember where it was even.
- And then, yeah, I remember going to Bristol for a conference and being absent minded like I was. I didn't take the address with me, and I just assumed it would be at the University of Bristol, so I got there no, it was at the University of the West of England, so I was sent there. And there I met Kate Gleeson for the first time, and she was so kind. She saw this lost soul and drove me to the conference. She was one of the organisers. Quite typical for her. As I later got to know, some years later. But you meet people and then you sort of get to know them a few years later. You know? Yeah, my first impression of her was totally correct.
- Lois: Lovely. And so, how long were you on the committee for?
- Annadís: Oh God, I'm not actually quite sure. I'm not quite sure how long I was there. Three years maybe. I can't remember. Yeah.
- Lois: Yeah, what kind of things did you do? Were you in charge of any particular tasks?
- Annadís: I think I was made into something like liaison officer.
- Lois: Ah, very nice.
- Annadís: So, I set up a Facebook page at the time, very good at taking photos which I must send to you actually.
- Lois: Yes.

- Annadís: Yeah. I always forget about it because I have to fill in some form. I wonder if I can just fill in the form for all of the photos because they're from the same event.
- Lois: I think you can.
- Annadís: Yeah. I can do that.
- Lois: Yeah.
- Annadís: So, yes, so, yeah, I think I was... I didn't have any sort of big tasks. I also had quite small children. But, you know, I really enjoyed taking part when we were like deciding about the conferences and thinking about what speakers should be there. It was truly wonderful.
- Lois: Yeah, nice. Lovely. And so how do you think POWES has maybe developed over the years? You know, do you think there have been any changes in its aims and things like that?
- Annadís: I think it just sort of moves with the time, with development and feminist theory and what we should be looking for. Probably in those first years it sort of, you know, we were looking at gender a lot and then becoming more intersectional. And I think and I hope what will happen with POWES is also that the makeup of POWES will be more intersectional. And what a loss to miss Marsha from, she was doing such important work and drawing in people and bringing in perspectives that were really important. So, hopefully, we managed to reflect that, but it sort of, the composition, the core composition of POWES are really wonderful, open-minded people. I think. And who really are aware of power relations and society and try to be introspective of that and how they relate to other people and how POWES relates to other people.
- [0:58:45]
- And I like the fact that you don't see any TERF [Trans-exclusionary radical feminists] feminism there.
- Lois: Yes.
- Annadís: I really like that. And it hasn't really been an issue except they just accept it. So that is something I really like. That hasn't been an issue in Iceland either. But we haven't, thankfully we haven't had like a sort of feminists rising up and saying, "Oh women and men, they should, they are biologically made that way and should be like that". So, we haven't had that either.
- Lois: Good.
- Annadís: Yeah, so I think it will hopefully POWES will develop, and it will become more intersectional. But continue to develop, because this sort of warm heart, the sort of warmth, this acceptance, this sort of embrace. I see myself walking into a warm embrace when I go there. And with still, well, there still are critical questions being asked and plans to smash patriarchy are very important. So, and the humour. The humour which is also part of feminism has always been a huge part of POWES.
- Lois: That's nice.
- Annadís: Yeah. You know, you're ultimately doing very serious discussions. And then just sort of total silliness, which is fun. And has to be there too. And I love the fact that we always go to Cumberland Lodge, and we have all these little stern representatives of power on the walls, and then you have those feminist fashioning vaginas and doing all kinds of things - Barbies and having representations that challenge the status quo and you have that too.
- Lois: Nice contrast.
- Annadís: So, I love that. I love that, yeah. You have to have that.

- Lois: Yeah. Yeah, that's lovely. Oh perfect. So, nearing the end now. So, do you also have any involvement with feminist activism at the moment, or at periods in your career?
- Annadís: Iceland is so small. So, yeah, like I said, it's only 360,000, 370,000 of us. So, like the group of feminists is, I am mostly in academia, but then I have friends who are MPs. So, you know, and my PhD students are like very active. And that's maybe why I feel so tame because they are so active and I feel an absolute blob in comparison to them, as I always tell them. I feel so conservative when I look at them. I think, you know, I sort of tend to trust in the system, whatever one...
- And I don't [sound cutting out] the members, absolutely, and yes, so, I'm not... yeah, I am part and I'm a member of the Women's Rights Society. I follow discussions. I haven't been heavily involved but I really follow all kinds of discussions around violence and so on. But I haven't become like a spokesperson for activist groups. But I try to produce knowledge that's helpful and that is... can be used by those who want to change the world into to a better place, because ultimately that's what we want to achieve. We want to create a better place with the work that we're doing. Shed a light on how things that are not okay and they need to be improved.
- [1:03:46]
- And, of course, yeah, this article that I wrote just after my Master's, it was absolute feminist activism. Total. Total, yes, I think it was experienced like that.
- Lois: Yes. Yeah.
- Annadís: I don't think I'm quite as active in that sense as I was then. Yeah. But, yeah, no, yeah. Yeah, yeah, I'm not in the fore front. I'm not a spokesperson for any of the groups, but I support them.
- Lois: Yeah.
- Annadís: Any way I can.
- Lois: Yeah, I suppose there's a bit of an age difference I think that happens as well sometimes. When we were younger, we tend to get involved in things more I suppose. But yes.
- Annadís: Yeah, and I, you know, yeah, I just try to speak up for things I think are right. I don't laugh at certain jokes, and I try to be a feminist killjoy when I can, but my students are feminist killjoys that totally put me to shame. I am so conservative in comparison.
- Lois: That's brilliant. You've obviously taught them well.
- Annadís: Well, they're teaching me.
- Lois: Yes.
- Annadís: "Annadís, have you thought about, you know?" And I'm like, "Hmm, hmm, you're right, yes". Sorry.
- Lois: Brilliant. So, in terms of feminism and psychology more broadly then, what impact do you think feminists have had in the field of psychology so far, and what do you think remains to be accomplished?
- Annadís: Well, I think feminists, I mean the ways of collecting knowledge and the ways of talking about knowledge and whatever, that's something that feminists have had a lot of influence, I'm talking about power relations, they've made that an issue. You can't really... I just remember because I did an article on gender and alcohol and then I remember someone writing an article on alcohol consumption and there was this gender perspective obviously missing. And then right afterwards some feminist came and wrote an article on, "Hey, there's a very important factor. Something you really should have paid attention to".

So, I think you can't just... it's harder to be a misogynist in today's world than it was. And, yeah, so we react to it more. I also think the way feminists think about, like research has had a lot of influence, like with the qualitative research methods. It's been really so very, very important. It hasn't had much of an impact in Iceland, but it has elsewhere. Definitely. So yes.

Lois: Might still? Might still in Iceland potentially.

Annadís: It might happen. It might happen.. When I first moved to Iceland in 96, I approached the department of psychology and I offered to teach a course on psychology and women. At the time that would have been what we called it. And no, no, they didn't want that. And then I came again, I said, "You know, I've had this idea for a course, you know, called Critical Psychology," or whatever. I can't remember what I... and then they were just like, "No, you can do the other course, but you have to call it the Measurement of Gender Difference".

[1:08:25]

Lois: Interesting.

Annadís: So, I did that but then I just sort of, in the end I didn't teach that course. I taught one lesson because I was sort of hijacked to England because of all of the lecturers who got pregnant at the LSE.

Lois: How did that feel for you having that experience of these kind of rejections and trying to almost mainstream your proposals?

Annadís: I thought it was what I expected it's, and I thought it was hilarious actually although, you know, coming... maybe I just... maybe I was just so sure of myself, I don't know, but they were not going to let me in except editing quite heavily. Well, I wasn't having any of that. But then in the end I didn't teach that course and they did... the course Measurement of gender difference. But with some feminism included. Someone else taught that. But, yes, I didn't take that on.

Lois: Good. (Laughter)

Annadís: But I would not have taught that.

Lois: Yes, of course.

Annadís: I would have talked about measurement of gender difference, but from a critical perspective.

Lois: Yeah.

Annadís: So, yeah.

Lois: Of course.

Annadís: Yeah. And I don't... I think the time will come for psychology here to change. They have to be part of the modern world, if you want to teach your students properly, you have to teach them qualitative research methods, for God's sake. And once you start teaching that, you know, feminism slides in. All of that. So, yeah, I think that will change.

Lois: Yeah.

Annadís: So, yeah, I am hopeful.

Lois: Yeah.

Annadís: I think so. I look at all those young researchers and thinkers and I think they're all so marvellous. I think they will continue, bring on the change.

Lois: Yeah.

- Annadís: That is needed, yes.
- Lois: Yeah, okay. Yeah, did you think there was anything to kind of, that feminism remained to accomplish within psychology?
- [1:11:08]
- Annadís: Oh, I'm sure lots of things. I think it needs to be... I think it needs to think about more about politics in psychology. That's really the big work that psychology needs to do, look into its own history, look at where their ideas come from and what those ideas are doing in terms of politics.
- Lois: Yeah, that's really interesting.
- Annadís: They need to be aware of the politics in their production of truth.
- Lois: Yeah, absolutely.
- Annadís: Yeah.
- Lois: So, what advice would you give to feminists entering psychology now?
- Annadís: What advice? I would tell them to read Sara Ahmed's *Living a Feminist Life* and look at her toolkit there. I think there is a lot of really good things there in terms of also just self-care, so you don't burn out. That you're not taking on all of the battles by yourself. But also, this constant look at where things come from, what they're doing.
- Lois: Yeah.
- Annadís: But, yeah, basically read that book.
- Lois: That's the way to go. (Laughter) Perfect.
- Annadís: (Laughter) And become a feminist killjoy who doesn't burn yourself out.
- Lois: Yes, yeah, no, that is a very good piece of advice. I agree. (Laughter)
- Annadís: Yeah.
- Lois: Lovely. So, I think that's the end. Is there anything else that I haven't mentioned that you'd like to touch on or cover?
- Annadís: No, I think you've got most of it, you know. You know, it's funny, we are living in this tiny country here and at the same time, you know, what is wonderful about Iceland is it has very vibrant feminism and the feminist underground is very strong and so on. But everyone knows everyone and, you know, not many universities and all of that, so it's a bit of a different environment to the UK.
- Lois: And do you think that's impacted your trajectory throughout your life at all?
- Annadís: Coming from Iceland?
- Lois: Mm.
- Annadís: Yeah, I mean I think if I'd lived in the UK, I'm not sure I'd ended up in academia. I mean my father was a taxi driver, my mother had me when she was 17. But, you know, but I always felt... I never was going to become someone working in the university. I never saw myself doing that. I could see myself as a fantastic movie star and singing and writing my own films and plays and so on. But I never, but somehow it just got through that. But then, of course, being in that sort of system, welfare system that's supported me, and that's something that we really need to guard, feminists here, we



really need to guard that. So, I don't think because of class, I don't think I would have... I don't think I would have reached the position I am in now in in the UK. Although you see fantastic people like Bridgette Rickett and others who have. But I'm not sure.

Lois: Yeah. Makes it a bit more difficult maybe.

Annadís: Yeah, yeah. So... anyway, it's sometimes worth –

Lois: Yes.

Annadís: You can be a big fish in a tiny pond. And then but get lost in the big one.

Lois: Yeah. Yeah, that's a good... it's interesting. Brilliant. So, before we finish off, for the record, could you state your gender please?

Annadís: Woman, I identify myself as she.

Lois: Brilliant. And a place and date of birth.

Annadís: 13th May 1964, Reykjavik, Iceland.

Lois: Lovely. And your occupation.

Annadís: Associate Professor in Research Methodology at the Faculty of Education at the University of Iceland.

[End of Transcript]