

Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Asia Anna Eaton

*Interviewed by Meghan George
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
June 18, 2018*

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MG: Meghan George, Interviewer

AAE: Asia Anna Eaton, Interview participant

MG: Okay, so we are recording. All right, thank you so much for being here. This interview is being recorded in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on June 28, 2018 by Meghan George. So if you could please state your full name as well as your place and date of birth.

AAE: Sure. Asia Anna Eaton is my full name. I was born in San Francisco, California on March 12, 1980.

MG: So just to get started, can you talk a little bit about the emergence and development of your feminist identity?

AAE: Sure. My feminist identity is still developing. Let me be *very* clear about that. Every day, new veils are lifted and I achieve new insights into how gender and race and culture and class intersect and construct one another.

My feminist education started in high school, early high school, in tenth grade. We had to do a book project, and for reasons I can't remember I decided to do mine on Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy*. I don't know why I decided to select that book, but I remember it had a purple cover and it was about female genital cutting - female genital mutilation - and gender roles, and how gender roles are imposed upon women and how women suffer from that disproportionately across the world. And it was also about resistance. In fact, I think the secret of joy is resistance. I should have looked it up before this discussion. So that opened my eyes to new ways of thinking about what I had been taught not to question up to that point.

Then in college I did the *Vagina Monologues* and I took some more classes on race and gender, and I saw this video. What is it called... I have to... oh! *The Color of Fear*. That's what it was. I saw this video *The Color of Fear*, I think it was produced in the '90s, and it was about racism - everyday racism, White supremacy, and how it's sort of infused into our language, and our thinking, and all of our practices. So it was through literature and film that I grew a feminist consciousness. But, I didn't really understand intersectionality until I was in my post-doc and I'm still very much growing in my awareness of issues around diversity and inclusion and my practices.

MG: So, you said that the initial impetus was picking up that book. Do you have anything from your home life, any role models, or was this sort of an eye-opening experience that you would never have even considered gender and femininity....?

[Part 1: 3:28]

AAE: It was pretty eye-opening. I mean to be fair, as a child, even as a very young child, I was always consumed about fairness inside the home, outside the home. I was always monitoring to make sure that resources were being distributed evenly, and I always befriended students in class who I thought were on the margins. And I was always very sensitive, so I think I had that leaning towards caring about social justice stuff, but I can't remember being really critical of gender until that book. And my mom identified as a feminist later in life, after me actually, so while I could see that she was feminist in many ways growing up, she was never explicit about it.

MG: Do you think that they were more on an implicit level, some of those cues?

AAE: You know, I think my parents actually had a pretty traditional general dynamic between the two of them. I have a mother and a father and I grew up with them, in the same home as them, and a younger brother. And they had a pretty traditional gender dynamic in that my mother stayed home and devoted most of her labor to raising us. My dad worked outside the home and she cooked and did a lot of those traditional feminine roles.

But, she was also very driven and brilliant and excelled in the things that she put her energy on her. She's an artist and an architect. I didn't see this at the time. I actually didn't see her strengths, because I was more focused on how my mom and dad are complementary gender-wise. My dad was the intellectual and my mom was the warm caregiver. I didn't see that until I was much older.

MG: Did you feel support when you went on to the higher education? Were they supportive of your choices?

AAE: Oh yeah, absolutely. Both of my parents are college-educated and there was never a question as to whether or not I would go to college. It was just a question where. So, my whole life... I guess it's similar to my feelings about gender. I had very cookie cutter, generic status quo idea of how my life is going to unfold in a linear way. At this age, I was going to college, potentially grad school, get married. I mean, I was brought up in a very privileged environment, not for my whole childhood, but for most of it, we were well off financially. My whole family is White and we grew up in a safe community in the US. I don't want to say that I bought into system justifying myths entirely, but they were just there and I didn't have any reason to criticize them. It was working for me, I guess, and I guess as a young child, you're just taking things at face value. I mean, I have two kids myself and they take things at face value. I mean, if I tell them the Tooth Fairy exists, they believe it. They believe in Santa Claus. Some opponents of same-sex marriage have said, "Well how I am going to explain this to my kids?" And I think to myself, "Please. Your kids will explain it to you. That will not be a problem for them to understand at all." (laughs)

MG: So you...you had expected to go on to university and potentially grad school. Can you talk a bit about...about more about that development, of how you chose your path once you got into university?

[Part 1: 8:02]

AAE: So again, I guess books play a heavy role in my identity development because I found some books on psychology. I think Carl Jung was one of the first psychologists in a Barnes & Noble when I was like 14, 15. I started thinking I was going to be a therapist. The guy who wrote *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*. Do you remember his name?

MG: I don't recall.

AAE: Oh...Oliver Sacks! Oliver Sacks I got really into. I thought, "I'm going to be a therapist." So, I declared my major in psychology pretty early on in college. But of course, I didn't go the therapy route, and that is the result of a couple of classes I took with Dr. Margaret Clark - Peggy Clark - who's now at Yale. I took some classes with her, small discussion level classes - 12, 15 people. One on emotion, and one on interpersonal relationships. We read primary articles, and they were so cool. Something about the level of analysis just felt right with me. Yes, of course if you wanted to know how A affects B, you would do this random assignment before this experiment. Of course, this is all really logical. I get it. And so I kind of fell in love with social psychology through that. She and Eli Finkel, who was there at the time, at Carnegie Mellon University, here [in Pittsburgh], actually. The two of them mentored me through the process of applying to grad schools and figuring out what kind of programs interested me, what kind of mentors would be good for me. You know, I've always had good mentors my whole life. I get kind of emotional when I think about it, because I don't really know why...why I've always had such amazing mentors, who cared about me on a personal level as well as professional, but I have. And that's 100% why I've managed in this field as well as I have. I mean, I have other privileges, and skills, and resources that have helped me along the way, but I'm telling you - without each and every one of those mentors at critical steps, I wouldn't have continued on.

MG: I'm gonna step back for a second. I do want to talk about mentorship in just a second, but before we get into all that, with psychology, and I know you have a background in statistics...very scientific minded. Did you encounter any issues being a woman in more scientific experimental environments?

AAE: I did - I definitely have had a number of instances where I could tell someone I was talking to...at a conference, at a colloquium, wasn't taking me seriously. I remember people even rolling their eyes. There was one man after an award I got, I was describing the project to him, another academic, and he'd started to be very rude to me. So I decided that I wanted to end this conversation, and I stuck my hand out. I put my hand out for him to shake and he wouldn't shake it. He wanted me to stay there and engage in this hostility. It was really awkward. But, where I went to grad school, I didn't have too many of those experiences.

MG: So do you think that that was because of these mentorship experiences made you...

AAE: Yeah, I do.

MG: Were you taught how to deal with confrontations or negative experiences?

[Part 1: 12:17]

AAE: Yes. My mentors in grad school included Penny Visser, John Cacioppo who's recently deceased, and Josh Correll. It was a very small social psych program there. We met every week as a full program. I met with Penny multiple times a week and they were

preparing us to be - as John would say – “Elite Scholars.” And their model of elite scholarship was around this concept of playing with ideas. It's not criticism, it's just playing with ideas. I try to help my grad students understand that framework, but I can't communicate as well as they could. When people are asking you about potential confounds in your study or future directions or problems with your materials, they're just playing with ideas. They're invested, they're interested and they're trying to find out more. You know...the criticism was hard at first but I did learn how to bounce back conversationally when talking about my research.

MG: It almost sounds as if that advice is “Don't take it personally.”

AAE: Yeah

MG: Which I find is something that women often have to be told especially. As a mentor yourself, do you find that people respond differently to you telling them that it's just playing with ideas, and you know, it's don't take it personally?

AAE: I mean I think a lot of the students I mentor are very high achieving. I don't want to stay people-pleasers because that's not true of all of them, but they want to do well and want to be acknowledged for doing well, and criticism feels like a failure. So, it's hard to impress upon them that even rejection from a journal, or rejection from a grant or award committee...it doesn't mean that the quality of your work is low, and it certainly doesn't mean the quality of your ideas is poor. It often means there's an alternate way of looking at things you didn't account for, or maybe there was another proposal or submission that was just more mature. And then sometimes it's luck. Sometimes it's luck and randomness. I mean I'm an associate editor for PWQ [*Psychology of Women Quarterly*] now and I can tell you that I very regularly get reviews from reviewers that are hugely conflicting. Like I get 3 reviewers on a paper and one says reject, one says major revisions, one says minor revisions. All three experts in the field, right? There's just this tremendous variance in what they focus on, what they appreciate, where their values are, how they were doing that day. So that's another thing that I try to communicate to my students. There's a lot of randomness in the scholarship process. I mean think about the process of collecting data - you don't know what you're going to get. Even if you have perfect, perfectly designed studies, backed by theory, you know, your measures are accurate. There's still a lot of chance that can interfere with you detecting the results you're looking for. Sometimes you're wrong too. That happens a lot too. (shrugs and laughs).

MG: In this era of transparency, yeah, for sure. (Laughs). So, is that something you were aware of, in grad school when you were conducting your own research or is that something that you've learned throughout your career?

[Part 1: 16:38]

AAE: That is something that I was made aware of. That you're going to have studies that are not interpretable, and you're going to make fatal flaws in your design and methodology that will make a study not recoverable. So, you know, that's just the nature of experimental design. And then of course, there's also bias that we all bring into the process. Although I have more to say about that later. (laughs)

MG: So, I know that you have sort of adopted some mixed methods in some of your research. Can you talk about how that started, and how you go about designing your own research, maybe from the early stages of your career up to now?

AAE: Absolutely. I didn't do much feminist psychology in grad school. It was basic research that I was trained to do. And I got exemplary training and I wouldn't change it for the world. But, I learned, you know, quantitative experimental methods. As a post-doc, that's when I really started doing feminist work for the first time. I got some collaborators: Suzanna Rose, my postdoc mentor, and Dionne Stephens, who used multiple methodologies. I sort of piggybacked, especially with Dionne, onto some projects she was doing. And she mentored me through the process of learning how to do qualitative work. Desdama Rios also mentored me through learning how to do interviews. Dionne help me with focus groups, Desde helped me with interviews and also with the reasoning behind using qualitative methods. So I feel very comfortable with both of them at this point, and I love qualitative methods. I think that might be the future of feminist psychology actually, because it's person-centered, it's empowering for participants and the storytelling beyond being compelling at an emotional level - people's stories are their realities so that is the way to get to someone's individual reality with all the different layers, all the intersections of their identities, all their changes over time. I mean, what they're saying may not be strictly true, but it's true for them. I think there's value in that. I choose qualitative methods when I'm investigating an area that there is not much research in, and we need some foundational stuff. So, people's understandings of a phenomenon, like for example I've been doing some research on non-consensual porn and revenge porn. And how do you even define those terms, how do people think of those terms? What is included in those umbrella terms for men and for women of different ages, because the media can't even get their terms correct. Anyway, so you know, when I'm interested in defining something or looking at it from a deep perspective, then I use qualitative. And, if I'm interested in making generalizations to other samples or populations, when I'm interested in being able to demonstrate cause and effect, or when I'm working with well-established theories and areas of research, I tend to do more quantitative.

MG: When you...so you came from this more empirical line of work. Could you talk a little bit about sort of the merging of that feminist methodology, and feminist theory and how it came about that you sort of brought the two - the empirical and the more qualitative, more feminist perspectives - together?

AAE: So I think if you study gender long enough from any level, sociological, anthropological, wherever, it's not too long before you realize you can't study gender without studying race. And you can't study gender and race without studying class. And you can't study those three, without studying ability, and sexuality.

[Part 1: 22:18]

Because women's experiences aren't all alike, and all White women's experiences aren't all alike. All white lesbian women's experiences aren't all alike. So, I think I just got to a point in studying gender where I realized quantitative methods just were not going to give me the full story in certain cases. And main effects, or 2 or 3 or even 4-way interactions weren't going to give me the full story, because we're a multitude. That's when I started getting interested in qualitative methods that are less generalizable but will go deeper. And...can you repeat the question again?

MG: Just talking about how you brought together the empirical and the feminist...

AAE: Oh yeah. Well, I guess I kind of got a little disenchanted by empirical work too, and not just with the replication crisis. But although that's been an important movement and I'm very glad for it, there was something missing in just working with numbers and on-line survey data. There was something missing in my fulfillment as a researcher so that also pushed me towards doing more qualitative work.

MG: Now, you've also you mentioned the revenge porn research that you're doing, and I know you do research sort of outside of academia, a lot of policy changing stuff. So, can you tell me how you sort of...it sounds...I can sort of guess how you got into that, but can you explain how you took your research and applied it to some of these broader areas?

AAE: Yes, absolutely. So, through the qualitative research which got me outside the Ivory Tower, I started making connections with community organizations. Community stations for urban girls in Miami, like Girl Power and then eventually the CCRI [Cyber Civil Rights Initiative]. Now, in the case of the CCRI, the CEO Holly Jacobs, who actually has her Ph.D. in I-O [Industrial-Organizational] psychology...she contacted me. She saw that I was doing some work in the community, and I did some work on sexual violence, intimate partner violence from a feminist standpoint, and she sought me out. She as being someone local who could help her conduct the research she needed to get her policy aims accomplished, because at the time when she first contacted me in like 2014, or 2015, there was almost no research on non-consensual porn. No one knew what frameworks to use to understand this phenomenon, no one had any idea of the prevalence except it appeared to be growing based on media reports, or the consequences or the nature of the perpetration and she needed all that data to be able to push for bills to criminalize non-consensual porn at the state and federal level, so we started off by writing some grants together. We were very ambitious, wrote large national grants. Didn't get funded. And eventually she got some funding through Facebook to do some research with me and that's how we actually got to our first data collection and it's been a whirlwind since then.

MG: So we're here at SPSSI [Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues.] Obviously you have the social justice sort of bent to a lot of your work. I expect at the CCRI was not your first foray into social justice, so could you talk about some of your other projects?

[Part 1: 27:05]

AAE: Sure. So I had done work before then looking at discrimination in the workplace and discrimination in interpersonal relationships. I mean my research, the way that I'm describing it, at this point anyway, looks at how gender and social power interact in the workplace and in intimate partner relationships. So in the workplace I've looked at things like how people perceive gay men's suitability for leadership, Latino leadership styles, the experience of those who've moved up in social class in terms of concealing or revealing their former identities in the workplace. In intimate partner relationships, I've looked at intimate partner violence verbal, sexual coercion -- mainly male to female verbal sexual coercion -- and also power dynamics in sexual scripts. So that's just a smattering of some of the research I did before the non-consensual porn stuff, and it was all rooted in feminist values and beliefs.

MG: Well...while we're sort of on the topic of SPSSI, you're the co-chair this year and you've received awards. Tell me about your involvement with the organization and what that's meant to you.

AAE: SPSSI is an organization that I had no awareness of until I was on the tenure-track, and I got involved as a result of first applying to one of the conferences. And then, I ended up developing a working collaboration and ultimately a friendship with Desdmona Rios, who herself was a co-chair at a certain point. I don't know. I slowly just started investing in SPSSI because these are my people, and I was talking to you earlier about how SPSSI is very non-hierarchical. Everyone's interested in making sure that their research reaches and impacts the public in positive ways. They care about the same issues I care about: peace, education, prejudice and environment, and they're doing really innovative stuff. Every conference, every SPSSI conference that I've ever been to has been topical and innovative.

[End of Part 1: Begin Part 2]

Innovative methods, for doing research, innovative ideas around teaching, so there's nothing stale about this conference and about this division. They're always self-critical, and as a result, end up being cutting edge so, you know, SPSSI is my conference home. And for the foreseeable future, but then Division 35 [Society for the Psychology of Women of the American Psychological Association] as I was telling you, that sort of is my identity home and then I got involved in Division 35 in grad school. And I'm grateful to that Division for a great number of things, but among them, giving me a language to use to describe my research. Giving me a legitimized language to talk about feminist psychology, and you know the journals, the people who participate in the Division...they all bring legitimacy to the work that I wanted to do and then I felt more secure about really taking it on.

MG: You're also involved in terms of editing and consulting for other journals - *PWQ* [*Psychology of Women Quarterly*], *Sex Roles*. So, with all of all of this on your plate can you talk about some of the rewarding aspects of those, personally as well as working with other people on these projects?

[Part 2: 1:46]

AAE: Sure, absolutely. I mean, my students and my colleagues are the bright spot in my professional life. My colleagues, by and large, are also close friends because I work with people who have similar values and interests as me. I've developed some close friendships through working with people at SPSSI and Division 35 and STP [Society for the Teaching of Psychology.] So my students are the other bright spot, and mentorship is really what gets me up in the morning. And as I was telling you before, I had such great mentors in my life. I feel compelled to give back on a daily basis and watching my students achieve the goals that they set out to achieve for themselves, whether it is publishing in a journal, or getting a certain type of job or developing expertise on something, watching them achieve their own personal goals...it's the greatest. It's so fulfilling. I can only take so much credit, but even just to be around them as this is happening is exciting. Right? To see them getting R&R [revise and resubmit] on this work that they poured their heart into, and now it's moving to the next step...yeah. Those are my two favorite aspects of my work probably, is mentoring collaborating. And mentoring students though research. But you were saying with my editing positions, like what do I get out of it? I mean I get a behind-the-scenes look at how the field

operates, that I can then give to my students. And by being co-chair in the conference, I am seeing how decisions are being made at the highest level, and I can communicate that back to my students and better prepare them for opportunities and disappointments. So now, I can see how decisions were made about awards, and that's been a big thing for me in the last couple of years, is nominating my students and colleagues for absolutely everything I can. Sometimes there's not a lot of people in the pool, and they are as deserving as anyone so it's gotten me conscious of that kind of stuff. That's a big plus of doing service and editorial work.

MG: Your mentorship - you've received awards for your teaching and mentorship, so obviously people are nominating you as well for well-deserved awards. And you've sort of touched on this, but is there sort of a key to harnessing, you know, all of the positives in your students? What's your relationship with your graduate students?

AAE: So I mean you'd have to ask them to get the real message on that, but I like to think of us as collaborators. They're just junior collaborators and I think if I had to choose one thing that I do to make those relationships and their professional careers fruitful and happy, it would be that I give them a lot of latitude in choosing what they want to study. So I study gender and social power. If they want to study anything that intersects with that even a tiny bit, I'm up for the challenge. So I have a student right now who was interested in millennials and stereotypes about millennials. What do I know about stereotypes and millennials? Nada. But [I know about] stereotypes and she wanted to apply to the workplace, and I'm like, "Close enough. Let's do it." And so she loves what she's doing, because you know, as I often tell them, grad school doesn't pay very much. It's full of rejection, your job prospects aren't even very good in terms of going into an academic position. It's a huge amount of effort and time that has to go into it. You don't get a lot of pats on the back. What's going to keep you going? It has to be your love for your research.

[Part 2: 6:40]

So my students love their research and I let them do their they love, even if it means it's extra work on my part for him to learn outside of my area of expertise. But then my areas of expertise expand. So I mean, if you look at the research that I've done on the tenure track, it may not seem perfectly coherent because I am adapting to the needs of my community, the needs and interests of my students. I guess I could just study like first date scripts for the rest of my life, but I wouldn't be enjoying myself if I did.

MG: You speak of your community. So I know you're at Florida International University. With your research both with undergrads as well as community members, has your research adapted to that community? Is that something that you can take elsewhere?

AAE: Oh, absolutely. I mean, I've learned how to approach collaborations with community partners, how to be humble and how to be of service in those situations, to see myself as a worker or employee of the organization, right, rather than someone who's coming in from the outside to direct it. I get how to do relationship building and the time that it takes, and the effort that it takes, in order to figure out what is the best way to answer the questions that the community agency wants to answer, and doesn't have the answers to. So I definitely think I could take that elsewhere. And then you know, the students at FIU I definitely had to adapt my research to understand their experiences because I came from the University of Chicago, which is a small private school with like 4,000 undergrads. And FIU is the fourth largest university in the nation. It's like 60,000 students. It's Hispanic-serving. In fact, it's Hispanic-

majority. Something like 65% of students self-identify as Hispanic, and it's a public school and a commuter school, so totally different student population. Lot of first generation students, so you know, if I wanted to study gender roles in intimate partner relationships with this population, it was going to look real different. Or at least that's what I thought at the beginning. Turns out, Machismo, Marianismo are not so different from stereotypical masculinity and femininity after all. But yeah, I had to just keep expanding the areas I was comfortable inquiring about, and I had to get more and more collaborators who could walk me through the process, but that's what I like to do.

MG: Where you are now, I know Dionne Stephens is at FIU as well, right? So in terms of collaborations and friendships, I imagine working with other collaborators, can you talk about sort of the environment, the working environment for you there, and sort of the collegial aspect of that?

AAE: I think that I am lucky beyond belief to be at the same university as Dionne and to have gotten her mentorship over the years. We are work wives. I get excited about seeing her. She's incredibly creative and sees the big picture and then I sort of see the details, the more fine-grained stuff like "okay, we've got to implement this. And how are we going to implement it? And wait, what we have to look into theories that investigate these issues we can't just go there blind." Anyway, we complement each other really well and I adore working with her. She has a human development background too, which is complementary to mine. She has a qualitative background and I have a quantitative background, so we work really well together. Our strengths are in different areas, but our values are in the same place. So yeah.

[Part 2: 12:03]

MG: I'm going to sort of shift gears just a little bit, kind of going back to the mentorship idea, but the future of research and feminist perspectives, feminist theory. Where do you see things going and where do you see yourself in your students fitting into that?

AAE: I think that feminist psychology is going to reach its arms out into sub-disciplines of psychology that haven't really felt its impact yet. There's a legal psychology and I-O psychology program at my institution, for example. There's not much feminist research in there, which signals to me opportunity. Opportunity to use feminist lenses and theories and methods to understand issues from a perspective that will enable you to improve the health and well-being of women and girls. There so many fields have yet to take advantage of feminist theory and methods, so it has a lot of room to grow. I think the future of feminist psychology is probably more qualitative, at least in the near future. More qualitative, and more applied. I see it being more and more responsive to social justice needs and crises, you know, in the moment, in vivo. I mean, *PWQ* as of like two days ago was the number one journal in Women's Studies, so I do believe psychology is a hub science and it looks like psychology of women is a hub area from which all of women's studies draws. I would like to see more PhD programs that combine psychology and women's and gender studies, but with the current climate and financial hesitation around that I don't think it's going to happen. But you never know, I mean the climate changes. I think as women get into more and more leadership positions, in business and politics and globally, feminist approaches are going to catch on, also in practice, in industry and being informed by feminist theory.

MG: Is that something...you're obviously a successful woman who has a high position in a university, you have a family...how are you navigating sort of your life and your different identities as you're going through your days?

AAE: Navigating my identity as a feminist and psychologist is very straightforward, because I introduce myself as a feminist social psychologist. That's like a perfectly unified experience for me. My psychological science work is rooted in feminism. I mean, I don't know how other people choose the theories that they decide to use, or the methods that they decide to use, or the questions they decide to investigate, but I choose all of mine on the basis of wanting to do work that improves the lives of marginalized and oppressed populations including women and girls. Because we all have...we're all making these selections on the basis of some internal drive. Like, nobody works with every single theory, or every single method. You sort of narrow your scope. And what basis do I narrow on my scope? On the basis of their basis of feminist values. So I decided to make inroads in that area. As far as balancing work and family? That I definitely have a harder time with. I'm really grateful to have a husband who is extremely involved in parenting our kids. He brings them to school every morning, picks them up. He is active in the big and the small ways, from doing laundry to finding an after-school reading tutor, and making sure that they show up for those lessons. So, I have a really supportive partner, that helps. I think Sheryl Sandberg was the one who said, "The partner that you choose as a professional woman is the most important professional decision you'll ever make," so I definitely concur with that.

[Part 2: 17:38]

You know, I also I have a lot of other privileges. You know...I live in a neighborhood very close to my school, because I can afford it, so I don't have a long commute. So, there's not a lot of time wasted when I'm going between work and home. We have babysitters and a nanny, because I can afford it. And, I have a lot of social support. I have people to call when I'm feeling overwhelmed. I have people that will help me actually do the work that needs to be done. They'll say, "That's it, just give me something." It's through some privileges and through my social connections that I stay afloat but it's not...it's not always pretty. When I say afloat, sometimes we're talking, like, the waters up to here (gestures water up to neck).

MG: So what advice would you give to people, you know, your students that are at that sort of important precipice, looking out at potential life choices. What can you draw from your experience to give advice for not only your students studying the more broad topics, but specifically, feminist research?

AAE: I would say forget about this linear life trajectory - that's a bunch of garbage, everybody's paths are circuitous and unpredictable. Take six years in grad school if you need to take six years in grad school. Do a three-year post-doc if you need to do a three-year post-doc. Leave academia if you don't like it. I mean, there's a lot of good to do in this world outside of universities. So really, follow what you're passionate about and then be okay with what that means in terms of your timeline. You know, if you have to re-specialize or if you have to relocate, forgive yourself for not looking like you thought you were supposed to look at age whatever it is, because that's all a lie. That's all a lie. I mean, maybe whatever, the average woman in the United States has a first child at age 26 let's say, but if you look at the distribution, it's like all over the place! And there should not be any moral judgments about where in the distribution you land or not, so seeing yourself as empowered to resist these myths that we've been taught, about the ideal career, the ideal worker, the ideal parent, the

ideal partner...it's all a lie. So I think, and I still have to tell myself that, especially as a parent I think. I have to remind myself that I'm doing the best I can every day, and my style of parenting and my interactions with my children are precious, and they're mine, and they're not something that's up for comparison.

MG: So let's focus on some of these accomplishments, then. What in your life, both personally and professionally, are you most proud of, that you think about and reassure yourself with.

AAE: You know what, that's a strange question, because I almost feel like I'm a little premature to be doing this interview. I don't have...I haven't been president of a society. I haven't gotten a three million dollar grant to, you know, study sexual violence at 12 different universities. I haven't written three books like I don't have those kinds of accomplishments right now. (laughs). What I have is the satisfaction of knowing that my students are happier than average. I know they are. I know that for a fact. And knowing that we have a pretty honest and mutually supportive relationship, even though, you know, I don't deny that there's a power dynamic.

[Part 2: 22:20]

I mean, I grade my graduate students in their classes, I critique them on their papers. So, you know, I have...I hold power over them for sure, but I try and invite them to challenge me and invite them to articulate whatever their truth is. And so, I feel like I have healthy relationships with my students, and that's probably the accomplishment that I'm proudest of. But it's taken a lot of time and sacrifice. I have like 8 or 9 grad students. One just graduated, which is why I said 8 or 9...so 8. I do think I want to reorient the way I'm spending my time post-tenure, which hopefully will be soon. I'm up for tenure right now. But I think that'll be a nice point for me to reconsider how much time I'm devoting to what, and what I want my long-term contributions to the field to be.

MG: Well, it sounds as though you're sort of fostering that in your grad students as well, so even if you do take a slight step back, you've created this environment that will still keep going.

AAE: Yep. People say, I think it was my student Adriana Medina who said that my lab, the PWR Lab, which stands for Power, Women and Relationship - PWR - is like a cult in that you can never really leave. We had a reunion in the lab the other day, with people in the lab, well 5 and 6 years ago, came to it so I have created a small but thriving intellectual community that will go on and branch out even in my absence.

MG: I admit, I did research the lab and found your...the music video that was put together.

AAE: Haha! Yes!! (laughs, raises arms in excitement)

MG: It did feel kind of like I want to join the cult. I was watching it. That is a really great environment. (Laughs)

AAE: (laughs) We have fun. If you're not having fun, there's no point. You've got to not take yourself so seriously in this profession. We take ourselves so seriously as academics. We hold our ideas so close to our hearts, and we invest so much in our writing and it's torn apart and, you know....we need perspective. It's not saving lives here, you know, the work we're

doing is important and yeah, ultimately over the course of your career if you work hard at using research to inform policy you might be able to save some lives. But I'm not an ER doctor, you know what I'm saying?? In general, the stakes are lower, so to be so concerned about every mistake and every turn, to take yourself so seriously, it's...I don't know why we have a culture like that but we do. Again, I guess it has to do with people being achievement-oriented, and always wanting to see themselves progress and feeling inferior...yeah.

MG: So that's sort of...You're almost trying to change the culture and bridge the world, really you're, you know...

[Part 2: 26:21]

AAE: That would be...boy, if I could have any effect on the culture, boy, that would for sure be my life's accomplishment. Because it's a toxic culture, academia is.

MG: Especially if you're in any sort of minority or have any intersecting identities, absolutely.

MG: I mean, I think it's toxic for everyone. The way that...(exhales) we are trying to devote ourselves to our work as though we have no other purpose. You don't see people in business staying late, night after night, for no pay, right? And part of that is we love what we do. And it can be kind of addicting discovering new data and learning new literatures, you know, it gets your adrenaline pumping. But we need perspective too. So, I'm getting that slowly through the work that I'm doing with, for example, CCRI and Lotus House, well, no Lotus Village. That's the largest shelter serving women experiencing homelessness in the US, and it happens to be based in Miami. We've started collaborating with them, so that sort of kept me...my thinking about my job right-sized. Here is where I am (makes a gesture indicating middle) in the grand order of things. I'm not at the bottom and I'm not at the top. The work that I'm doing isn't insignificant, but it's not do or die.

MG: Is there anything I haven't touched on that you want to share, or anything you want to express to people who are going to be seeing this video or reading the transcript?

AAE: I don't know, I mean, probably just to say that you're doing better than you think you are. We're so hard on ourselves. You're doing better than you think you are, you know? Sit down, if you're having a hard day, and really think about what you've accomplished in the last year. It's so, it's so much more than we realize. Think about all of the talks and lectures you gave, and the students who you saw grow, and think about the conversations that you've had with colleagues at a conference, where you've learned something and they've learned something. We're doing better than we think we are.

MG: Thank you very much, and this is definitely one of those things that I will think about: a wonderful conversation with somebody with such a positive and successful view on things. So, thank you so much.

AAE: You're so welcome.

MG: Thank you.

[Part 2: 29:41]