**Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project**

**Interview with Lyn Mikel Brown**

***Interviewed by Xinfu (Grace) Zhang and Alexandra Rutherford***
***Pittsburgh, PA***
***March 5, 2016***



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LB: Lyn Mikel Brown, Interview participant
AR: Alexandra Rutherford, Interviewer
GZ: Grace Xinfu Zhang, Interviewer
AF: Alexandra Fox

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AF: Maybe you can say your name, date and place of birth?

LB: Lyn Mikel Brown, February 12, 1956, Calais, Maine, a small town in Downeast Maine, on the Canadian border.

GZ: Tell me about how you relate to feminism?

LB: I relate to feminism very personally. For me it has been a way of seeing the world, a way of interacting with people, a way of understanding politics. So it is very personal and it is obviously very political. It is a way to be in connection with people who want to address social injustice and to work toward social change.

GZ: Was your family very political as well? What are their points of view on feminism when you were growing up?

LB: I grew up working class, working poor, and my family moved gradually into the lower-middle class. My dad and my mom both lived through the Depression as children, so class issues frame my feminism. I know what it feels like to be on the margins and I know what it feels like to be not attended to or central to the way people think about things. My dad was actually pretty political and he was involved in union work and the Democratic Party. We lived in a very Republication part of the state, and I remember him arguing with his friends; he wasn't afraid to state his opinion. He wouldn't have called himself a feminist, though later he was quite proud of the work I did. Both of my parents were very outspoken. I think that was a model for my later feminism.

AR: Was there a point in your life that feminism came together for you or was it more gradual?

LB: I was in high school, it was the 70's, and I remember asking for a subscription to *Ms. Magazine*. I mean, that was the first magazine I subscribed to, and then *Psychology Today*, both of them. So I think I was just really engaged in feminism as a critical way of seeing the world. You know, growing up working class I felt very pissed off at times. I had an outsider view of things, and I think feminism gave me a language for that. My interest in psychology developed because I took an elective in high school, public high school obviously, and there was a quarter term elective in Psychology. The

guy who taught it, I cannot remember his name, but he taught it through a social psychology lens. He taught Stanley Milgram's work and Solomon Asch's work, the research about questioning authority and pressure to conform, and that was it for me. Because that's how I felt. I felt like I was always questioning authority and always pressed to conform, to be a certain kind of girl, and I didn't have a language or a place for that, and I found it. I don't know if you remember the Asch experiments with the lines, where people were socially pressured to agree with the group and to say they see something that wasn't there - I felt like that really spoke to me. You know I felt pressed all the time. I felt I had to line up, so that definitely led me into Psychology, and also gave me a foundation for feminism.

GZ: And you did your B.A. in Psychology in multiple universities?

LB: Yeah, I went to three undergraduate schools. I started at the University of Maine. It was the only school I applied to. I am first generation, so I didn't visit different schools and weigh my options, none of the stuff that I did with my daughter. I applied to one school and if I didn't get in, it was plan B. So I began at the University of Maine as a psychology major. I took classes in social psychology, as well as in philosophy—I was especially interested in existentialism. I think I was still preoccupied with this question of conformity and free choice.

The University was quite large for me. I grew up in a town of about 3500. So I never felt quite comfortable there, and when I had the opportunity to go abroad for a year I did. It was in the 70's when the dollar was very strong compared to the British pound, so it was less expensive for me to spend a year in England. I had an incredible year. Psychology didn't really exist as a subject area at the University of Kent at that point. They laughed at me. It was all about sociology, and so while I was thinking about psychology, I took seminars in sociology.

I remember reading Berger and Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* and experiencing a kind of awakening. Somehow everything I had been struggling with--personal meaning making, power, authority, and conformity, how people experience reality came together in a way that made sense. For a time, it was everything to me, maybe because it helped explain how understandings of reality take hold and develop into institutional structures. I think I was always asking, "Who get to say what's real or important or worthy?" "Why are some things valued over others? "Why does the system work for some and not for others?" And that was really engaging to me. I think my love of the intersection of Psychology and Education and Sociology really began there. I think the questions that guide my feminism have their roots there.

My final year I attended Ottawa University in Ottawa, Kansas. I met a friend, Melanie, in England, who graduated from there. It was a small private college with a specialized course system--you could work intensively on one or two courses a semester, so you could focus and go very deep. That suited me. After I graduated from Ottawa, I worked at a halfway house in Connecticut for women coming out of prison. And just seeing the life

that they experienced in every case, the trauma, the poverty, and the racism, increased my desire to go to graduate school.

While I was doing that work, I was in touch with my friend Melanie who had begun a doctoral program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. I had started a Masters program at Southern Connecticut State in experimental psychology, and I was like, "Why did I do this? This is so not me." While in the program, I took a Psychology of Women course and confided my frustration and my interests to the professor. It was 1982. She said, "Okay, I've just ordered this new book at the bookstore. Why don't you pick it up for me. It sounds like something you might be really interested in. Why don't you read it and come back and tell me about it." It was Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* and I was like, "Oh my god, this is what I want to do. I want to talk to people about how they make sense of the world, I want to understand the ways in which women and girls are negotiating sexism, putting two and two together." And I realized that, of course, Carol Gilligan was at the Harvard Ed School.

When I told Melanie what I wanted to do, she said "You really should come here." So my friend helped me connect with people there - and this is a very feminist move right? She helped me write a political application. As a working-class girl, I had no idea how to do this stuff. She sent me concept papers, told me about research not yet published, and said, "Okay, the latest work is here, so if you can explain how you want to work on these ideas, this is your best chance of getting in." And that's what I did. At the time, the professors would see a list of admitted students and choose the people they wanted to work with. Because of the way I wrote my application, Carol chose me. I ended up working with her directly at Harvard. And I am pretty sure if it hadn't been for this kind of friendship and feminist support, I would not have been accepted.

And I have to tell you, when I got into Harvard, I called my dad and he said, "Well, this has been a great day. Your mother won 400 dollars in the lottery, the ice broke on the lake, and you got into Harvard." So I was number three in his day.

GZ: What was it like to work with Carol Gilligan? Could you talk a little bit about that?

LB: She is brilliant, political, passionate, funny. Working with Carol was expansive, kind of mind-blowing because she never settled for face value. She challenged us to look beneath the surface of things, to really understand how power was operating. She was both really busy and really generous with her time, even if it meant, "You can meet with me if you walk me home," so it was like fitting people in at these wild times. But the thing that was so fabulous about working with her is that she gathered an incredible group of doctoral students and post-docs around her, as a kind of feminist collective. So we existed and supported and we worked with one another within a very patriarchal institutional space. I could tell you lots of stories about the disparities and unfairness, but absolutely we had a safe, lively, and demanding critical space.

This was a powerful feminist moment in the Boston area. Jean Baker Miller and theorists at the Stone Center were just putting out this incredible feminist psychoanalytic work,

and Mary Belenky and the *Women's Ways of Knowing* collective were exploring feminist epistemology, so there were these pockets of women's work and feminist work that came together. Carol was really good at bringing us all together to talk about the intersections of the work. That was pretty powerful, and I remember sometimes sitting at the table and thinking, "Oh my god, this is exactly where I want to be." And the people I worked with there are still some of my best friends. I spent most of this AWP conference with Deborah Tolman, one of my closest friends from that time. But I'm close to a lot of people who emerged through that program, including Annie Rogers, Niobe Way, Janie Ward, and my partner, Mark Tappan, who worked with both Larry Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan. We met during that time.

GZ: It sounds like your interest in feminism and in psychology started pretty early on. When you wrote the books, how did your interest especially in girls, come for you in your career?

LB: When I think about working with girls or studying girls, that clearly came from working with Carol. She identified girls' and women's voices as discrepant data within traditional psychology. That was the stuff you threw out because it didn't match up or fall in line with models built on the study of boys and men, you know, and that was the stuff she was interested in. Her goal was to remap the moral domain and to build an inclusive psychology. She was always saying, "We are going there; if that's the stuff people can't make sense of, that's where we are going." The Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development is when I started doing research on girls.

I learned to really engage with girls in the process of creating a qualitative method we called the Listener's Guide. We wanted to capture the resonant, polyphonic nature of voice, so we created a way of tracing different voices through an interview text, following the interweaving of both psychological and politically resistance. Together as a group we read articles in hermeneutic and narrative psychology, in feminist psychoanalysis and feminist methods, and about becoming resistant readers of literary texts. We saw psychology as a practice of relationship and we wanted to create a method that allowed us to be close, responsive listeners. The method we developed is one of the pieces of work I'm most proud of. It also reflects our collaborative way of working together as a Project.

AR: You mentioned that your partner worked with Larry Kohlberg, and we actually interviewed Carol Gilligan for this project - you are in good company - and Carol has of course told us the story many times about how she worked with Larry Kohlberg and it was how the extent to which his work was based on masculine voice that was universalized that in part, led her to looking at different voices, so what kind of conversations were you all having at the Harvard Project about these kind of things? What kinds of conversations were you and your partner having about Kohlberg?

LB: Mark and I were thinking and talking all the time about stage theory and voice. One of my earliest memories is learning from him how to stage Kohlberg's hypothetical moral dilemmas. But more generally, debates were very contentious, particularly at the doctoral

student level. Carol and Larry were actually friends, but Larry's health was not good and a lot of his graduate students were very protective of him, and considered this kind of debate and challenge stressful, or they worried about him, I think. I am not really sure, but there was definitely a sense of different camps, and it was contentious at times. But the work, the debate about the nature of morality, about what is development and what is good psychology was incredible. Two brilliant minds grappling with some of the hardest issues.

And there was a lot of poking fun at the fact that Mark and I met and we were getting married. Larry Kohlberg threw us a party and wrote us one of his famous crazy poems, which was funny. He used to write long and clever poems for special events and somewhere we still have that. But it wasn't really odd for the two of us, together. I mean we were doing our own work and so were they. At the time we were working with Carol, however, she wasn't tenured, and Larry was. He was not only tenured, but he was also the father, the power figure. And I think negotiating that was tricky.

I don't want to speak for Carol, but I think it was complicated and I think she was incredible during that time. There were students of Larry's that automatically grew in the ranks and were given tenured positions, and Carol, there was a national search for her position. So you can see the discrepancies, and we really felt loyal and supportive of her and we also read the scene through a critical feminist lens, I would say. It was a complicated time, but it was also very generative, I think sometimes these debates, the contentiousness too, are the most generative. I took classes with Larry and I took classes with Carol. The dialogues were very complex and deep. People pushed one another. In some ways I think it was the best of the work, and also in some ways it was the hardest.

GZ: We are going to step into your research. Can you tell us what is the general theme or topics that you've done in your career?

LB: When we were doing the work with girls, the notion that struck me most about Carol's work was the 'resistance.' We did a longitudinal, cross-sectional study at Laurel School, where we traced girls' development over time. We looked at the developmental moments and ways in which girls were healthy and outspoken and resistant, where they challenged expectations and where they were pressed to give up what felt real and true to them, and we documented the struggle that breaks out at early adolescence. There was a lot of interest in the psychodynamics of that, the psychological resistance—the idea that a natural, healthy resistance in childhood, because it threatened to become political at adolescence, would, under pressure, move underground and become changed or lost. But I was always interested in the political resistance. How can we support resistant voices through adolescence? What are the conditions that support a healthy, open resistance to unfairness and hurt? Deborah Tolman and I have talked about this often. She is more interested in understanding the psychological resistance, as was Carol, and Carol was very influenced by Erikson and Freud, but that was not where I came from. I came from a different place, from social psychology. My interest had always been about resistance to authority, refusal to conform.

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It is fascinating, but for me the piece of that work at Laurel that most moved me and changed me was an interview with a girl named Anna. Anna was working class at this elite private school, and I connected with her particular struggle around speaking her truths and her anger in the face of class privilege. She was very angry at the ways in which she was seen in the school and the ways her lack of privilege and cultural capital revealed her as working class, even though she was brilliant. I interviewed her for five years during the project. The first two years she barely spoke to me. I remember all thirteen of us would fly out to Ohio and we would stay at the school for three days. This was my dissertation project, which would become *Meeting at the Crossroads*. So I was the project director for this. We would all do the interviews, and then we would meet together in the evenings and talk and process what was going on, and I remember saying, "Oh man, this interview with Anna. I know there is something there but she is not talking to me." So, in the third year when she was in 9th grade, she just like opened up and we had amazing discussions around social class. And she was not only angry at the school, I think she was also angry at some ways her family and her brothers treated her - just a wave of unfairness she was able to articulate.

When she graduated, because some of us kept in touch with these girls--I wrote a lot of letters for these girls for college applications, and Anna was one of them. She ended up going to Swarthmore to study Classics. In their final year in high school, the girls had to write a final essay and present it to the entire high school, and it is very big and formal thing. Anna wanted to use this as an opportunity to call out the school's classism, so she wrote a very political essay and her parents, because they worried about the reaction, wouldn't attend. So I flew out to be her representative. I sat at the back of the room in a special seat reserved for the family, holding a rose for her while she gave, in her words, "the best senior speech ever," where "she told the school exactly what I think." She had so much truth to tell, but people weren't listening.

I thought that our interviews were an intervention in these girls' lives and it was also an intervention in my life because through those interviews I really became interested in the intersection of social class and gender. And a lot of what I would name gender or sexism in my earlier years was actually classism, you know, the unfairness and the anger were the result of that intersection. I had a lot of anger growing up and she helped me tap into that. She inspired *Raising Their Voices*, which was a book about social class and the politics of girls' anger. I wanted to know what enables voice and how to listen to anger as a political emotion, as something that motivates social change and for that reason gets shut down in girls. Anger is considered an unfeminine emotion and so angry girls—those who often have the most insight--are especially constrained. I decided I really want to explore anger and I really want to explore working class girls' anger. So I did a study in which I videotaped girls in focus groups talking about a whole range of issues, both middle class girls with professional families and working class groups of girls. And it was the most expansive space for me and my work at the time. I think every time I do a new research project or write a new book, it is because girls have taught me something that either I didn't know that I knew or I didn't know at all.

Researching the book on anger, I heard and witnessed a lot of horizontal violence— girls taking out their anger at mistreatment and hurt on other girls horizontally, because it was safer than taking it out on boys or teachers—those with more power to hurt them. My next book was on girl-fighting behavior. I did a re-analysis of the interviews we had done at the Harvard Project and also collected new interviews, listening to girls talk about their conflicted relationships. I wanted to interrupt the "mean girl" narrative, which is a way to blame girls for their struggle to express often justified anger at injustice or hurt. We set girls up in the ways we socialize them and when they enact aggression toward one another we blame them for it, calling them mean, dramatic, and all those things. 24:15

When I was listening to girls talk about how and why they fight with other girls, I heard them talk a lot about media and how much relational aggression they witnessed in TV shows, especially Reality TV. So I connected with Sharon Lamb, a feminist psychologist and friend, and we wrote *Packaging Girlhood*. We analyzed the different forms of media that girls ingest and the messages they get from their media, and wrote about how parents can mitigate the impact of these messages through critical conversations and media literacy. This was early in the [emergence of] social media, and it feels like the kind and volume of media girls engage with has changed so much in just ten years. But I think the messaging has not changed so much, which is shocking. And then we wrote *Packaging Boyhood* because that was just interesting--after writing about girls, you really think about the different messages boys receive. My partner Mark Tappan is also a co-author on that book; his work is on boys' development and masculinity, so that was particularly interesting to him too.

GZ: What was it like to work with your husband? How did your collaboration work? Do you see any connection between girlhood and boyhood?

LB: We met in graduate school, we shared an office in graduate school; we now share a job at Colby. We had opportunities when applying for positions--some places wanted him but would give me something marginal, some places wanted me and would give him something marginal. But Colby's job description invited couples to apply. That was unusual. So we applied and we've been there for twenty-five years, sharing a job. When we first went to Colby, we shared an office but not so anymore. It's been a great experience. Early on, because we were in the same research group, we actually did a lot of writing together; some of our early articles were co-authored. Over the years we've specialized in different areas. It has been great actually, to collaborate with my partner.

I think what struck us about Packaging Girlhood and Boyhood was not only how very differently boys and girls experience media and marketing, but how these differences open up possibilities for parents to talk with children about their lives in ways that develop their critical thinking and open up their imaginations.

AR: As a person who is familiar with girlhood as well as boyhood, comparing the two, what is going on there?

27:35

LB: Socialization is going on here. We exacerbate small biological differences into a pink and blue, Mars and Venus dichotomy. I think we are now discovering the power of genuine relationships and what it means to affirm humanity and allow youth to express gender in ways that feel good and right. My friend, Niobe Way, a professor at NYU, maps boys' close relationships and shows how open they are to one another in childhood, how able they are to talk about love and friendship, and how they experience a crisis during early adolescence similar to the girls we listened to. Like girls, they are pressed to cover their thoughts and feelings to meet some acceptable version of boyhood. Niobe uses both the Listening Guide method we developed at the Harvard Project and the theoretical framework to reveal the power of listening, of genuine relationship, to call into question the ways we cut both girls and boys off from what they feel and think and know to be true from their experiences.

GZ: Tell us a little bit about your forthcoming book please?

LB: *Powered by Girl* is a field guide for working with youth activists. I feel like so much of my work for the past fifteen years has been to translate theoretical work and research findings into practice. I teach courses on girls' activism and youth organizing and train adults who want to do this work in the organizations I've helped to develop—SPARK Movement and Hardy Girls. And I just know how hard it is to work with youth in ways that support their best work. *Powered By Girl* is a book about how to create the conditions that enable youth activism. I draw from work in education and sociology, critical race theory, and women's and gender studies to create a feminist girl-fueled way of working with girl activists. I interviewed a diverse group of eighteen young women activists and eight very experienced older women activists who work with girls. And through their conversations I explore the conditions that are necessary to support girls and their activism. They have so generously shared their expertise and I have been able to write that into, not so much a how-to guide but a how-to-be in relationship guide—how to be in relationship with girls in a way that is respectful, that's enabling and supportive and non-oppressive, which is so difficult I think, even for feminists. Working *with* girls to create social change is very hard. I struggle with it all the time.

AR: It is so easy to slide into the adult view.

LB: Yeah, I have a class on Youth Participatory Action Research with seniors at Colby that I am teaching, all young women, nine of them. We are working in an alternative high school with girls from a teen pregnancy program. We are identifying a project that matters a lot to the girls and supporting them and thinking of ourselves as co-researchers with these girls, but it is so hard for me not to be the expert in the room. It is so hard to help my students listen and not take over the process. And where is the line, where is the boundary, and how do we enable this more horizontal process? So I don't think we are ever fully settled with this work. I think it is always a challenge.

AR: We want to hear more about your transition into activism. How did that happen? What is the relationship between your academic work and your activism?

LB: I think you can only do this kind of research for so long, you can only listen to girls for so long before thinking, "How do I join them in this work? How do I do something that can make their lives, our lives better?" And as a feminist the only real way to do that is to actually join them and to actually be in relationship; to find ways to enable their own work. And I guess I felt like, if I am going to do something seriously, I have to see if it works. I mean you can theorize all day long, but if you don't have a place where you can see how everything plays out and make adjustments, then what is it? And I teach in an education program, so that also means something to me--to think about how this looks on the ground and how this impacts people. I chose education pretty deliberately. When Mark and I were applying for positions, it was not just the shared position at Colby that attracted us, but education as a political space. Psychology isn't generally considered political, especially in small colleges. So this is my political work, my advocacy work. And because in a small college education is still a marginalized discipline, I don't have a lab. No research funds. So I had to build my own. I built mine in the community. I worked with two other community activists and literally around my friend's kitchen table, we came up with Hardy Girls Healthy Women. We came up with the logo, the mission and vision, and we built a nonprofit. And I am so lucky one of these women had experience in development, raising money, and one of them had experience in the non-profit management world, and I had the research experience and knowledge of girls' development. We succeeded because we actually had the bases covered. There is no way I could have done it myself.

2-08:40

Hardy Girls has been around since 2000. In central Maine, in a town where 70% of the kids are eligible for free or reduced lunch, we've managed to thrive in the community. We've reached thousands of girls through our work and we have incredible programs. I am most proud of the Girls' Advisory Board, which parallels the adult Board. The girls not only keep us current but they do local activism, including two annual conferences, one in our town and one in Portland, which is a major city an hour south of us. Every year they reach about four to five hundred girls between the two conferences. They develop the entire content. We begin working with them in October, and the conference is in April, and they build PowerPoints and they build workshops and we give them what they need. If they need help with public speaking we bring someone in to advise them and if they need media literacy work we bring someone in. We support them, but they do the actual work and that kind of girl-fueled work is just incredible. It is wonderful and I learn so much.

Another program I really love is Girls Coalition Group, where we have pairs of Colby students we call muses, not mentors, in the sense that they inspire these girls, who go into schools and work with a group of about eight to ten girls. There are over twenty groups just in our little area. They work with girls to develop their abilities to work in coalition, across differences, on the issues that girls identify as important to them, like sexual harassment or unpacking "mean girl" stuff. After processing and developing critical thinking around an issue they do an activist project.

SPARK Movement, which is the organization I developed with Deborah Tolman, has also been a really amazing place to do this girl-fueled work and to think about how to



2-15:47

translate this work and support girls who already have experience with activism. Girls come to SPARK with a lot of knowledge and experience. The girls are from all over the country, and we have girls from eight different countries. Their work is mostly online, although we bring them together once a year for a retreat and to do face-to-face action planning. And that work has yielded all kinds of incredible activist projects. When you bring girls together who have experience and energy, and give them the support they need, it is very powerful. We scaffold their activist work, we raise money and grants for this project and for staff support, and we pay the girls for their expertise and their time. We take this work very seriously.

*Powered by Girl* is an entirely girl-written, girl-edited blog that grew out of the girls' advisory board at Hardy Girls, although it is no longer connected. It is now primarily run by a group of amazing girls from the UK. So, I am the backdrop; the editors Skype me and we talk about the pieces and figure things out together when necessary. I love the work; it is so fun and they've taught me so much.

My daughter has been part of every one of those projects. I took her to Hardy Girl programs when she was little and she joined the Girls' Advisory Board in eighth grade and, in her junior and senior years in high school, she and a friend were co-presidents. She joined SPARK in high school as well. She is now a junior at Smith, a feminist, and a TA for a Psychology of Political Activism course. I've seen first-hand how powerful this work can be.

AR: All of the organizations are fascinating but I want to talk a little bit more about SPARK. You have written that part of the origin story was the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Women and Girls. Could you explain that connection?

LB: Deborah Tolman was on that task force. She and other psychologists, including Sharon Lamb, did a review of all the sexualization research literature and the effects of sexualization on girls and women. And there was not very much research on girls; it was mostly on women. But one of the recommendations at the very end of the report was that there needs to be some kind of grassroots movement. It was a call to action. And we thought we could initiate that. Deb was so invested in this research herself, and I thought, because of my activist work with girls, we could potentially build something. And so we were able to raise money for a Summit in October, 2010. We brought together 400 girls and women activists to really think about what a movement would look like around sexualization prevention. And we brought together some of the researchers whose work had been reviewed in the APA report and invited them to talk about their latest work, the stuff that wasn't actually out there yet. And we had panels of girl activists talking about how sexualization impacted them and sharing the digital and on the ground work they do.

We developed a team of girl activists called the SPARKteam, and brought them to the Summit to help with actions throughout the day. The team grew as a result and team members began to take on paid roles. Melissa Campbell, for example, one of the young women who joined our SPARK team of girl activists immediately after the Summit, became a program coordinator for SPARK. That's one of the things that is really

important for me and for Deb as well. If you are serious about doing this work, you have to follow this through and enable and empower girls. That's how SPARK Movement started—with the team. We had a lot of conversations with a variety of partner organizations, including a presentation at the APA headquarters in DC. We used the Summit to kick off the Movement.

We are still in debt to the APA Taskforce. Clearly that report has impacted us. But over time the girls really moved us to think about these issues more widely and they have shaped what SPARK Movement has become. They really challenged us to think differently about sexualization and objectification; they challenged us to look at the complexity; they pushed us to think about these issues more broadly. We have become an intersectional feminist project and our early focus on sexualization transformed over time. We are now igniting an anti-racist, gender justice movement.

AR: Can you speak about any of the specific projects from SPARK that stand out for you?

LB: The very first one stands out for me because it was a little bit of surprise and a little bit off our initial focus, at least we thought so at the time. It was the LEGO campaign. I don't know if you remember when LEGO put out their Friends line. They had conducted focus groups with girls and moms and asked about what they really wanted in LEGOS, because girls were not really buying their products. In response, they came out with this sexist pinkified Friends line--pre-designed sets with girls in night clubs, modeling, serving drinks, and in a hot tub. As a commentary on the new line, somebody posted a photo of an 80's LEGO ad for kids. The little girl in the ad was wearing overalls, her hair was in braids, the LEGOs were in primary colors. And we were like, this is very interesting. I remember getting on LEGO's Facebook page and reposting the 80's ad and adding a critical comment. Lots of people responded and shared. We started talking with the girls and they began posting, as did our partner orgs. The girls blogged about it and we thought, could this be our first big action? We certainly 2-22:44 thought it was a sexist line and the product was sexualizing. So the girls wrote a petition asking LEGO to change their marketing practices, that was our first truly successful petition—tens of thousands of signatures. Some of the girls on the team did a lot of research, looking at how LEGO markets their products to boys and girls. We were able to get a meeting with LEGO executives in New York. We sent two of our SPARK team girl researchers and two adults and the girls presented their report to LEGO. We got a nice letter back from LEGO saying that they will work on their gender marketing, and now, a few years later, they have a girl scientist line.

We started something there. It wasn't a direct cause and effect, but suddenly a lot of people started complaining about LEGO and other gendered marketing campaigns and I really feel we had an impact. I feel like we affected Target's decision a few years later to do away with pink and blue aisles; they now have a more gender-neutral toy section.

One of the smart things we did early on with SPARK is develop partner organizations. So when the girls push out a petition or a campaign, we can feed it out through these

organizations, so it can really take off. I have an affection for the LEGO campaign because we actually had this kind of impact and it was surprising and fun. And of course the Google Action was very powerful because it was completely girl-generated. The girls developed a campaign asking Google to diversify their Doodles. They did research on the Doodles to verify that they were not fairly representing people like them; they were not representing queer people, transgender people, people of color, or girls and women. They wrote an 11-page report, complete with graphs. They developed a very clever video to accompany a petition asking for more diversity. They created a Tumblr page that invited people to suggest women and people of color for Google to Doodle. By doing that good research and by reaching out to Google, as in so many cases, we've had the power to reach people at the highest levels and to have these conversations and put girls in seats of power. The girls met with Google executives via Google Hangout to share their research. This was in 2012 and by the next year, the Doodles were becoming increasingly diverse. So that was a really powerful experience. We saw how creative the girls can be and how much we can learn from them, especially around social media.

And, of course, the *Seventeen Magazine* action with Julia Bluhm. Originally we asked *Seventeen Magazine* to include one photo that wasn't Photoshopped - that was all we asked for, one, and we actually ended up having them announce their Body Peace Treaty, saying they would never digitally alter girls' bodies and faces. That was also a very long and complex campaign. We tend to hear about the petition that went viral that Julia wrote, but that was accompanied by a lot of other actions and tactics and connections and resources. We've had some real successes, but we've also had a ton of projects that didn't reach that level of media attention. We've had a series of interviews with black women artists and filmmakers, we've had girls protesting dress codes in their schools. Just all kinds of really great grassroots things that don't always reach that point, but they are really powerful and important.

GZ: You mentioned that some of your students are doing amazing work, let's talk about mentoring, tell me about the role of mentoring in your career and what is your role as a mentor?

LB: For me, I do think about mentoring in the way Amy Sullivan writes about a muse relationship. I think about it as, "How do you bring out the best in somebody else?" For me mentoring is about enabling conditions and creating opportunities, it is not about something I say or do exactly, it is about the space I create. I feel like that is what I try to put into practice. I don't have graduate students; I teach in an undergraduate college. My students come and go so fast, and so my sustained mentoring is largely with the young women who work at Hardy Girls. I am able to train them and educate them around feminism and how to work with other girls; and in some cases, I see them flourish through the organization--the girls that I work with on the Girls' Advisory Board, who I do activist work with, and the SPARK team girls I come to know and love and have interviewed for my book. Now I am going through this complicated process of getting the okay to have their names in my next book because I want their contribution to be known.

2-28:54

GZ: Speaking of power dynamics, in your own career have you ever felt discriminated against because of your gender or your age or class or the fact that you are a feminist?

LB: I feel like the piece for me is in that intersection of class and gender. I think more about social class. I had this conversation with Sharon Lamb, who also grew up working class. I remember going into graduate school and I spent most of my time observing. I remember Sharon saying, "They all wear this certain kind of necklace. They all know how to dress. How did they know how to speak this way?" It was really about cultural capital, for me. I don't know if it was overt discrimination, but I was certainly positioned in a certain way. I was able to adapt to the academy and I was able to learn how to speak and look, and I think that's why I am so tuned in to that stuff and why I get so pissed off. It came to me at a pretty late time; it came to me when I was moving into feminism. I think because I grew up in a place where it is not unusual to be working class, it wasn't until college or graduate school that I felt the disconnect and the micro-aggressions.

GZ: How did you overcome that? Did you have an inspirational quote that guided you along the way that you want to share with us?

LB: I think for me it was working in coalition with a lot of people, and it was Carol's decision to bring people together who challenged one another, and that was a safe space to be in. So it was a space where we could talk about power. We could talk about what you knew and the power of what you knew, what it brought to the setting or the project. I think that is why I stress the power of coalition-building so much in my work. And crossing boundaries and building spaces where people can do difference and not do sameness. I'm quoting Michelle Fine, who is one of my heroes. I think the experience at the doctoral level was really powerful.

GZ: You have a daughter and many pets, how did you navigate your personal life and your professional career?

LB: It has really been helpful to job share, although it is unusual, and to be able to live in a part of the country where that is affordable. We've always put our courses on alternate days, so if our daughter would be sick one of us could stay home with her. We just negotiated our lives to make that possible. I have an incredibly responsive and supportive partner, who is also in academia, so we could help each other, we support each other in the things we do. And we only have one child. You know, they say one is one, and two is ten, right? She was able to grow up with both of us available. And I think developing these activist organizations really benefited her; she had so many other mothers in her life. People who were not related to us but were engaged in her upbringing, and that was really important for her health and well-being, and mine as well--to be able to create that village I guess. And we do have those three cats and two dogs that our daughter left us with; she was the original animal lover. Now we love them too, but they were all her rescues.

3-10:49

GZ: What do you see as the future of feminist psychology? What has been accomplished? What needs to be done?

LB: I think feminist psychology has accomplished an enormous amount by raising questions of difference, struggling with barriers and boundaries, and by living that struggle out loud in public. Honestly, doing the hard work around intersectionality is an incredible accomplishment. It is not easy, we see a lot of hard conversations now in the field of feminist psychology, but those dialogues happen, and they are visible. I think the work has been really powerful and life-changing. It has changed every part of academia.

I think the future is about landing some of that hard stuff in the world and taking intersectionality and questions of colonialism seriously with respect to research and activism. I think, still, in articles that I review there is what Jessica Henderson Daniels refers to as 'symbolic annihilation' of people of color, where psychologists, even feminist psychologists will report that they have a certain number of people of color, girls of color in their research, and then do the analysis as though they do not exist; they don't actually include the differences in their analysis. I am always sending papers back saying, where did the girls of color go? Why would you report them as participants if you are not going to include them in the analysis? I think we are still not there. There is a ton of work to do. I think there aren't enough studies of queer youth, we have not fully engaged with transnational feminisms, and I think we are behind in these respects. There is a lot more work to be done. I also go to the National Women's Studies Association conference every year and that work is alive and vibrant. The conference is incredibly diverse, there are active, lively debates happening. I went to an APA pre-conference session on transnationalism last year and, by comparison, it was like baby steps. Within Women's and Gender Studies, there is a level of theoretical analysis and translation into social change work that we are not even close to engaging. So the discourse and the analysis we need to be doing is still ahead of us, I think. There are brilliant people in this field and I have no doubt we'll get there, but there is work that needs to be done.

AF: We are here at AWP and the theme is Strong Girls and Wise Women and I love how you put yourself in the middle, and you spent your career listening to girls and working with girls and young women. Taking a step back from feminist psychology and just to look at feminism more generally as a movement, what is your feeling, opinion or assessment of where feminism is now and where the future of feminism is, based on your work with girls and young women in this moment?

LB: I think there is a real intergenerational division still, which breaks my heart. I think some of it is inevitable, but I think if we can find a way to learn from one another, to offer what we know and to learn from girls and listen to what they know we have a chance of solving some of the wicked problems we face. I think a classic example right now is the lecturing around Hillary Clinton in the news and the finger wagging directed at young women who are voting for Bernie Sanders. It's as though we do all this work with girls and when they disagree with us, we shame and blame them. We say, "If you only knew what I know you wouldn't do this." And as someone with a daughter who is voting for Bernie Sanders, I feel like, you know, I have done my part and she gets to choose now. This adultist privilege is one of the biggest barriers to creating an intergenerational movement. We are absolutely not going

3-16:05

to get where we want to go if there are intergenerational divisions. It just doesn't work that way, because the future depends on what we can create together. I think, for me, that is probably the most frustrating thing. Maybe because I know how hard it is to be a woman, I put this on us to act differently, to listen differently. I think the work that women of color scholars and activists are doing with black girls is amazing. Ruth Nicole Brown's work, for example--finding ways to bring the girls' brilliance to the surface and enable them and not judge or shame them. I feel like there is a lot we can learn, we just need to listen and engage in genuine relationships and work in coalition with young women.

GZ: Is there anything else that I haven't mentioned that you would like to talk about yourself or your career, about psychology or about feminism?

LB: I don't think so, I feel like you really covered a lot.

AR: What continues to inspire you about the work that you do?

LB: I feel like a broken record, but it's the girls that I work with. What they teach me. The other thing that really excites me these days is interdisciplinary work, working across disciplinary boundaries, going to the National Women's Studies Association conferences, going to education and psychology conferences--much of what I read these days is in sociology and critical race theory, some of the best feminist analysis. I feel like this is something psychology needs – to be less insular. We need to read other things--and girls have taught me this--read other things, move out of your comfort zone, try things you are not used to trying. What is exciting for me and what I think feminist psychology needs, is to break out of our silos, to challenge insularity.

GZ: Thank you so much.

LB: Thank you.