

Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

**Interview with Ellyn Uram Kaschak
San José, California**

*Interviewed by A. Rutherford
Dryden, NY (interview conducted by zoom)
August 26th, 2015*

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AR: Alexandra Rutherford, Interviewer [Dryden, NY]

EK: Ellyn Uram Kaschak, Interview participant [San José, CA]

AR: Okay, now we're recording. So Ellyn, if I can ask you to please state your full name, place, and date of birth for the record.

EK: Ellyn Uram Kaschak. I was born in Brooklyn, New York, June 23rd, 1943.

AR: Great, to get us started, can you talk first about how you first became aware of feminism and what that meant to you?

EK: Well, I was in graduate school. I had gone to George Washington University for a Master's degree. They had a separate master's program. At the end of that program, I had been first in the class, but they told me, "We don't accept women into the PhD program; it doesn't matter how good your grades are. Women are just not a good investment. They will eventually drop out of the field to raise a family."

So, I went to work as a school psychologist for a couple of years; this was in the late 1960's, and the entire world was changing. During that time interval, Title IX took effect, and a lot of other changes that compelled the graduate programs to take women. So I finally could go back for my PhD at Ohio State University. The first year that I was there, NOW [National Organization of Women] put out the consciousness raising program they had back then and Naomi Weisstein's work came out, and Phyllis Chesler's. It just ignited everybody. So, I was already in psychology when I learned about feminism. I hadn't set out to change psychology, but that now changed. I had been searching for the kind of psychology I wanted to study but was satisfied by none. I would soon realize why it did not yet exist.

AR: So, it sounds like you hadn't really considered yourself a feminist before that time. It hadn't really been a part of your world or meaning making.

EK: It hadn't even occurred to me. I couldn't imagine that I could have lived a different life than I was living. And a lot of us at that time, we thought, "Whatever the discontent is, it's just me. I need to figure out a way to adjust to this world." So, I married a man who was supportive of my career, was not sexist before we even knew the word, and so on. I did the best I could do without feminism. [02:19]

AR: Can you go back and tell me a little bit about your upbringing? I know I read that you grew up in 1940's and 1950's in Brooklyn. And you have written about yourself as an outspoken

young girl and about your love of books and so on. Can you tell me a little bit more about your upbringing and your family and the influences that they might or might not had on you?

EK: My family was very immersed in the values of 1950's and it was a highly gendered world. If you look back right now, it was the most gendered decade. So, a lot of the issues that I had in childhood were "You can't do that because you're a girl." And they would just say it like that. I would say, "I want a chemistry set." And they said, "No, it's not for girls." Some other toy. "No, it's not for girls." And so almost everything that I wanted was not for girls. I hadn't heard of feminism, yet. I was a very good athlete and I asked them to buy me a baseball glove, but "not for girls." I'm left-handed and I learned to play baseball borrowing the boy's gloves and doing everything backwards. It was just, "You can't do it; it's your gender." I was rebellious because of that, but it never occurred to me that the world was going to change; I never could have seen it by myself because I was so convinced that there was something wrong with me.

AR: What were the messages in terms of your education? As you say, you went all the way through a PhD. Was there ever any family messaging that that wasn't kind of the appropriate route for girls?

EK: Absolutely, and it was very overt. You really couldn't even go to college, never mind get your PhD. You're a girl, why do you have to go to college? You marry somebody, hopefully, who went to college, but the most important thing is that you marry somebody. In my generation they had a thing, I don't know if they still say this, that going to school to get MRS degree?

AR: Yeah. That's one that I've heard.

EK: And only in that way did the girls start to go, I think it was the first generation of girls that started to go to get a MRS degree. And the way I negotiated it, my own little personal strategy, although I'm sure it wasn't only me, was to get an education and an MRS degree. So I'd bring home a husband at the end of it.

AR: Okay. So, when were you married? Were you married during your BA? Or just after?

EK: I was married during the week of graduation. I went back home, got married, and went back to graduation. The marriage lasted for about 7 years.

AR: So, tell me a little bit about your entrée into psychology and what attracted you to psychology as a place you would pursue graduate work and so on.

EK: Well, in the first place I came from a crazy family, like a lot of psychologists do. Some of it was that I had to figure out what's going on in this world; it makes no sense to me. That was one level of my motivation. The other was, it seemed to me that that's where everything comes together, is in psychology, in understanding the human mind that invents all the other disciplines. It could have been philosophy or literature, but I wanted to understand the mind and meaning. The meaning-of-life type questions; those big questions.

However, the years that I went to school were the years of behaviorism, the smallest questions. I'd navigate around it in funny ways until I could get to the psychology I wanted. My undergraduate major was Russian literature. Therefore, I speak Russian. It was the middle of the Cold War; it was an interesting thing to do. I like to say that my first supervisors were Chekhov and Dostoevsky. They were good supervisors!

AR: So, it sounds like you found a lot of psychology in literature?

EK: Yes. Literature and philosophy. I was trying to think what is this planet that I have been set down on all about. And its inhabitants.

AR: So, when did you actually turn more solidly towards academic psychology?

EK: I was always academically oriented. I remember that when I was fifteen years old, I wanted to be a professor. That was my thing. I loved learning; I loved teaching; I always loved school. School was my escape from whatever the insanity was at home. So, I knew I wanted to be a professor, and I knew I wanted to be a psychologist. I really knew all along, but the route was extremely circuitous to get there in terms of study. When I went to George Washington University for my Master's, I was following my husband at the point, who went to their law school. It was not the school I would have chosen for myself. They had a very traditional clinical program. I spent two years learning how to administer Rorschachs, TATs [Thematic Apperception Tests], and WISCs [Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children]. And that's what my job was as a school psychologist. I carried a test battery around in a case and administered two or three of them a day for years. It was horrible; it was the inner-city schools of Washington D.C. The kids hadn't the slightest idea what I was talking about. They had just declared the tracking system illegal. So, the schools were figuring out fancier way of doing tracking. Tracking was still made possible by sending in psychologists to administer tests; these kids would never get a full scale IQ above 70. It was a horrible job. I felt like I was really on the side of evil in my first job as a psychologist. The evil was racism before I ever thought of sexism.

AR: Do you recall at that point, were there any women on the faculty that you worked with? What was the situation like at George Washington at that point?

EK: All men. There was one part time female psychiatrist who taught about biochemistry. She was unimaginably old to us, distant, and unapproachable by any students. She kind of visited us from another world once a week. And very traditional clinicians immersed in years of administering Rorschach or whatever they had been doing. Even later in Ohio State, it was all men, and all teaching was from their perspective. We once spent an entire supervision discussing what to do if you get an erection during a session.

AR: Yeah. You were at Ohio State in the early 70s, so that was a wow, that was a tumultuous time.

EK: Actually, I was there in the late 60s. You see in early 70s, that's when I finished writing my dissertation. The second year I was there was the year that Kent State massacre happened. And

so, they shut us down also. We were tear-gassed, shut down and I got out of graduate school two months early.

AR: Well, I want to go back to how you embraced some of the feminist literature that was coming out at that time, but I also want to hear about your dissertation. What was your dissertation on?

EK: My dissertation was on physical communication (body language) in families as a function of the gender of the child. I managed to slide gender in at last. By that time, I was a confirmed feminist.

AR: Was that something that was intentional at that point? Because you were becoming more aware of gender as an important – for lack of a better word – construct to work with, or was that less intentional?

EK: The gender part was completely intentional. The rest of it was little bit less intentional because I had been doing family therapy and community psychology. So pragmatically I needed to do a dissertation in that area. By then I was completely conscious of gender, and I wanted to focus on gender.

AR: And who were you working with at that time at Ohio State?

EK: I was working with Jack Kaswan and Saul Siegel. They were both interested in working in communities to equalize power. Not the power of women of course. My immediate advisor was a behaviorist named Denny Nolan. It turned out that he had chosen to supervise the young women with whom he had a sexual interest. Basically, when women started to go back to school, we had to deal with sexual harassment from the male faculty. They were happy that there were women there because they had more interesting sex lives. And Denny Nolan was one of them; later, when alone with me in my apartment, he would sexually assault me. I had to fight him off physically. After that, he refused to chair my dissertation or speak to me again and that's why it took me another year to get done.

AR: Yeah. Unfortunately, this is not an uncommon story.

EK: I hope it is now.

AR: Yeah. So, tell me then a little bit about your turn towards feminism at this time. You mentioned Phyllis Chesler's work was influential to you. You've written about that too. How did you come across it?

EK: Well, we started a Women's Group at Ohio State. That was the first class into which they had accepted people of color and women in equal ratios to white men. It was a big, huge experiment on their part. It was a very radical and good program in a lot of ways. Somebody found the NOW [National Organization of Women] protocol that they used; it was kind of a set of guidelines for how to conduct consciousness-raising groups. And while we were in the CR group, we found Naomi Weisstein's and Phyllis Chesler's work. It wasn't a gradual process. It

was like, “What? Why didn’t I see that? You know, we used to call it a click”. It was like, “It’s everywhere, how could I have missed that all of these years?”

So, it wasn't even a gradual process. We were starved for it. And the first thing that happened in those days is that the women all became angry. And you know, there is always that cliché about how feminists are too angry, but you became so angry because you realized how you had been duped all these years. How you were conforming to something that wasn't fair. It wasn't just you; it was all women. It is overwhelming. At that point, we asked if we could have a class in psychology of women. They told us that we could, but we had to organize it ourselves because there was nobody to teach it. Which we did. And you know, from then on, I was a feminist, from one second to the next, basically.

AR: Wow, so a real immediate radical conversion in a way.

EK: Exactly! The heavens opened and that was it. [13:01]

AR: Tell me a little bit more about that first group, or that first course. What kinds of materials did you read? What was out there?

EK: It's hard to remember what else was out there at that point. This was 1968-1969. So, I'm not even sure what else we read. We found articles to read. Let me see. Simone de Beauvoir and newly emerging articles. The Broverman studies.

AR: Yeah. That was really early.

EK: It was quite early. And everybody in the group became a feminist. So, we were the first generation. We didn't have any mentors; we were the first. And I was doing mostly family systems work by this time. I hadn't gotten all the way to epistemology yet, but I was looking for a paradigm that included us, the women. Somehow, I just started epistemology on my own. It's a funny thing being part of that generation, because a lot of what I do is epistemology. What happened is, I had been studying behavior modification and then I moved to family systems and Jay Haley's work and the Palo Alto group. Soon enough it started to look to me like they were based in the same epistemology. Like it was all dealing with the outside, and not the inside and not gender or even context fully enough. I wrote a major theoretical paper about that issue. The men on the faculty were all entranced; it had never occurred to them. Nobody told me to go to the philosophy department, you're doing epistemology. There was one faculty man there, Dr. Harold Pepinsky, who was really involved in ethnomethodology. Harold Garfinkel had written a very dense but important book about ethnomethodology. That work influenced me a lot in the development of my work.

Frankly, Dr. Pepinsky offered to introduce me to his friend and colleague, Dr. Garfinkel, but the unspoken sexual demand led me to decline. Again, my career was interrupted by the insistent sexual price that I would not pay. Some did. I wouldn't or couldn't or...

My recent work on blindness is highly informed by ethnomethodology, which takes me back to what I lost in graduate school.

AR: We'll definitely talk about your recent work, which is just fascinating. I had to pry myself away from your book *Sight Unseen* to come and do the interview here. But let me ask you, and this is kind of an abstract question, so it might not be easily answerable, but when you had this conversion towards feminism, how did that change things for you? Both personally and professionally. How did it play out in your life?

EK: Well, it changed everything, in terms of what I was seeing, what I was feeling, where my life would go. I didn't decide to leave Ohio or anything specific like that. I did eventually get divorced, but I don't think it was the function of feminism. I think I was on that path anyway. But what it did was, I suddenly saw gender everywhere. It was a perceptual change. I am interested in vision and making meaning. Because the kaleidoscope moved and meaning, everything changed. Every place I looked I saw gendered politics - the way we were treated by the faculty, the way women were treated within professions, even the literature that I was reading. I could hardly read that literature anymore, because I recognized women were completely discriminated against in horrible ways. It was talking about the schizophrenogenic mother at that time (it was still in the literature) and the refrigerator mother for autism. It was like back to zero for me. What do I do now? I finally got into psychology and now I'm out once again.

AR: You discovered how androcentric it is.

EK: Yeah. Everything we discovered in the studies was: zero. What do I do then?

AR: Yeah, totally.

So, you went from Ohio State and did an internship at the VA in San Francisco, Palo Alto.

EK: That was the center of family therapy, back then. That's where Bateson, Satir and Hayley had been doing their major work.

AR: Oh, interesting. So, what was your experience like at the VA?

EK: So here I am now in all-male institution. Here I go again. The family therapy part was interesting, I enjoyed doing that. Now, in Palo Alto, I am 45 minutes away from San Francisco where everything is happening. But my supervisors were still male. There was one woman. It was a tough job, because not many people got better.... They were mostly chronic patients either due to the severity of problems or as a function of a desire to collect government benefits. There was only one woman's unit that was completely reserved for women diagnosed as schizophrenic and being hospitalized long-term. There was a male psychiatrist in charge, of course- the female patients all thought that they were part of his harem, that they were married to him. And he thought the same thing. He would do therapy saying, "Well, as my wife. I always treat you well." I never knew if it was his form of therapy or if he really believed that they were all his women. Probably both.

AR: Yeah. Were there more women trainees by that point?

EK: Yes, 50% of the interns were women. It was our group that was starting to be half women. That's how it went. Once again, we didn't have any women mentors or supervisors. We had each other and we tried to figure things out together.

AR: Yeah. Tell me a little bit about activism that you were engaged in at that time. There was so much going on in San Francisco. What did that part of your life look like at that point?

EK: Well, it was like totally having two lives. Being in Palo Alto as a mainstream professional during the day and then going to San Francisco at nights and on weekends. All this radical activity was going on. Women at the time were organizing around the abortion coalition; abortion was a big issue. It was way before AIDS, because the LGB community got organized around AIDS, but that's 15 years later. And what happened, I don't know how people got together informally, but those of us who were psychologists or therapists began meeting in San Francisco, talking about psychotherapy. And it was either behaviorism or Freud at that time. We began talking about how to make a psychotherapy that would be appropriate for women. It was in the air, every place. Everybody was talking about the various professions and how androcentric they were. We were meeting as a group, but there were two or three other groups in San Francisco, as I recall now. As well as in New York and several other urban areas. They were meeting and talking about "What are we going to do about psychotherapy?" We didn't really have any place else to turn, so we began to re-invent ourselves.

Basically, we began talking about gender, power dynamics, and the inordinate power that therapists exercised as experts. The tyranny of the DSM. We talked about trying to equalize the power between patient and therapist. We experimented a lot, tried to make people equal vulnerable, equally transparent, and so on. Some of it worked. Some didn't. That's how we did it, we made it up, tried it out and kept what made sense to us.

AR: I'd love to dive into more deeply about the establishment of the women's counseling service. Who was involved, and exactly how did you get organized? I'm only going to ask one question at a time, so first of all, who was involved?

EK: I may answer three, even though you just asked one. (Laugh) There I was of course. With me in the Women's Counseling Service were Sara Sharratt, who is still doing feminist work in Costa Rica, Sue Cox, Pat Grosh, and a couple of other therapists. Sue already had a degree. She had worked with Naomi Weisstein, as her student. Sara and I were both still interning at the VA hospital, and the other two people were social workers who were already practicing. There were two Latinas in our group. So, you can't say early feminist therapy was all white women. Maybe it was in some places, but our group was mixed from the beginning. It may have been so for less radical, more establishment-based groups.

AR: How did you get started? You wrote about putting out some signs and people showing up and you expected twenty, but there were two hundred?

EK: It was just like that. It was the way a collective starts. We met and started talking, criticizing psychology and we asked ourselves, "What are we going to do besides talk about it?" California at the time had a master's level license in marriage and family counseling. So, Sara and I took

the exam and got our licenses. I don't think most of the people that started in feminist therapy were licensed by the state and many were not yet therapists, but we were. That's how we started.

We printed a bunch of copies of our announcement, which I still have copies of, and we drew a women sign by hand, and xeroxed as many copies as we thought we needed. We went to all the places where there were cafes, bars, women's spaces, where we knew that women hung out: Bud's ice-cream, women's bars and cafes and all popular places that we knew women were, and we posted them. We informed them that, "Next Tuesday, we're introducing feminist therapy at the Unitarian Church. Show up." We really did expect ten or twenty women; we still had no idea that a whole movement was starting. We opened the doors and there were almost two hundred women standing there, waiting to come in.

AR: What did you talk to them about? What did you tell them?

EK: We told them what our critique was of psychotherapy. We told them that it didn't understand women. We told them that women were being held to a male standard of what is normal. We criticized disorders; we were already after the DSM and all the toxic nonsense that was in there. And they were thrilled and enlightened, as if released from some invisible chains.

We had already spoken at CSPP [California School of Professional Psychology], in traditional graduate schools, and the male faculty almost murdered us. That's how incensed they were at our ideas, that we dared challenge them. They would go crazy over talk about feminism, would yell and insult us. So, we girded our loins before we opened those doors we thought "Here we go again." You know, we were going to get it. The women who rushed in were thrilled, and they were cheering. Some of them signed up for the therapy afterwards and it was just like a wonderful turning point that we all experienced together.

AR: Afterwards what happened?

EK: We made more than \$300. \$2 a person. We could hardly have paid for the coffee pots alone, and suddenly, we had all this money. We paid for the room and the coffee and then we bought one of the first answering machines. I still have it. It was a big wooden box with a wheel-to-wheel reel that would get stuck when too many people left messages. We put it in a room in the house where a few of the members lived, and that's it. We were in business. We each worked in our own living room. It was as simple as that, it was totally ordinary, yet completely innovative and new.

AR: Well, tell me what kinds of folks you ended up seeing. What were the problems, what did they bring to you? Again, a collective portrait is fine. I'm just curious about what you encountered.

EK: Everybody had different problems, but a lot of women had the same underlying thinking and suffered from depression. We saw a lot of lesbian women who were slowly questioning the oppressions with which they had lived all their lives. Lesbian women in that generation had been locked up in hospitals; some had been given shock therapy as a potential cure. Husbands of heterosexual women were allowed to sign their wives into psychiatric hospitals without any

other permission and to authorize shock therapy. So, we were hearing all these horror stories. As we began to work more deeply with women as the center of our practice, we began hearing their memories of child abuse. At the time textbooks said one in a million or two families had a member who had been incested. The numbers were ridiculous. They attributed these numbers to disorganized families “on the other side of the tracks.” The entire field of trauma would eventually grow from these early seeds.

We were charging on a sliding scale from \$2 to \$30. We had a lot of clients immediately. A lot of what we were seeing was that women had been in consciousness raising groups. In them, you go to a certain point and then you feel stunned, angry and with a lot of new issues coming to consciousness. What do you do? Therapy developed just as they needed it. I think in a lot of ways feminist psychotherapy would have been stronger if we had stayed with that model, with the collective model. Because it has really become a commodity, there are now feminist therapists who charge \$250 an hour. I never could reconcile that for myself.

Women began coming to therapy and then, we would find out together what their pain was about. They started remembering experiences that they thought they didn't remember, or they had been to therapy before, and had been told that it was just a fantasy. You know, the Oedipal Complex and, you know, you father didn't molest you, but you wanted him to do it; it was a wish.

I wrote a counter-model to the Oedipus Complex in my first book, and I named it after Antigone, the daughter/sister of Oedipus. It was a psychology of women that still holds today. We saw women who were raped and couldn't go to the police, because they'd be psychologically raped another time; the courts had not changed yet. It was just the beginning of women really getting the strength and clarity to do all of this. That's what we were trying to bolster.

AR: You were having to make it up as you went along in terms of what the therapy would consist of.

EK: Right. I think back on it now and I think, “How was I so brash as to do that?” I think back on it now and my friends and I were sitting together and making up what we were doing with these people. It was so brave in a way. We were young; we had that vision, and we wanted to do something about it.

AR: Absolutely. Tell me a little bit more about the dynamics of the Women's Counseling Service itself. How you organized a collective effort, and then what were some of the problems or challenges that came up, to sustain that collective?

EK: How we organized it? We just did it. We met. We talked and then we acted. There would be a lot of problems that came up in that collective and in other ones, because there were differences of opinion on fees, on what boundaries with clients were necessary, and other issues. The collective couldn't have lasted that much longer, and most didn't. Several people left the field; they couldn't take the agony of the truth. Several people had serious breakdowns once they saw the world differently. Things just started crumbling, coming apart for them. The world was deconstructing before their amazed eyes.

Then they would have horrible psychotic episodes, and I know of at least two therapists just in San Francisco that this happened to. And then when they recovered, they wanted to do something concrete. They didn't want to deal with the psychological effects of injustice and oppression anymore. One became a realtor; the other went back to medical school, became an anesthesiologist. They just couldn't take dealing with how unfair the world is, I guess.

It crumbled for that, and for other reasons. Women had disagreements, others got in and out of relationships; all the regular things that happen to break up collectives.

AR: When did you disband as the Women's Counseling Service?

EK: I'm not sure of the date, I would say about 1975. I went to work as a professor in San José in '74 and within about a year or two years, I moved my practice to San José. There I started my own private practice. Sara went to work at Mission Mental Health as a bilingual psychologist and later to Sonoma State University as a professor. She later founded a feminist therapy group, named Chrysalis, with a few of her students. Most of us kept practicing, but not as a collective anymore.

AR: Could you recall, at that point, around 1974-75, how would you characterize the main principles of the feminist therapy that you were practicing at that point?

EK: Well, one of the basic ones was to listen to a woman's story and believe what she says. It sounds so simple, but it ignited a revolution that would change everything from psychotherapy to the laws. Some other ones were to do a power analysis and a gender analysis of every situation. Look for what was not being seen from the masculinist perspective. Question everything and then question it again. We widened the therapeutic lens to include the social and the cultural. In fact, my first official publication was about what I called Sociotherapy. For me the first question has always been, "How do you know what you know?" Those were the core ideas. We differed more on how we would set fees, issues of boundaries and self-disclosure, that sort of thing.

AR: But it's amazing how seemingly not radical, but radical, the idea of just listening to a woman and believing her is.

EK: Yes, it seems now more ordinary, not radical, and that's one of the things that has happened is that feminist therapies changed the field. More than existing strongly as a separate practice it has changed every other practice, often with credit not given to the early feminists. Things that we got vilified for are just common practice now. Narrative and trauma therapies are two examples of approaches that grew directly from feminist therapy.

AR: At this point in your career trajectory, you're starting up what has turned out to be a long career at San José State University. Tell me about some of the early days there. You were in both community psychology and family therapy. So, how did that come about? What was the community psychology program like at that point?

EK: At San José? They were just starting up. What happened is I applied there since I wanted to stay in the Bay area. My work and my life were already centered there. The other jobs available

that year were in Terre Haute and Memphis and Bakersfield. I write about the experience of those interviews in my upcoming memoir.

I applied at San Jose for a part-time temporary job teaching group dynamics. They responded that I wasn't qualified to teach group dynamics. They were right; I wasn't (although they would later require me to teach it). At the last minute, when I was wondering if I would even get a position, a faculty member, Bill Winter got a grant proposal funded by NIMH. The grant proposal was to bring in ethnic minorities from the community and train them in community psychology, send them back to their communities. It was a good and innovative program. They already had a program in individual clinical treatment, but family treatment had become very important in those years. They wanted to add it to their clinical training.

They had a fully functioning clinic with one-way mirrors completely ready for family therapy training. The department was looking for somebody who was half family therapy and half community psychology. I was probably the only person in the world, at least in the country, that was qualified for that position. Plus, I speak Spanish, the community in San José is mostly Latino. It was like there was a job made for me, and I was made for the job. There I was in San José.

AR: That's great. There are two questions that come into my mind. One is I want to ask you about your Costa Rica connection, and it sounds like you started going to Costa Rica very early in your life and have continued. But what originally took you to Costa Rica?

EK: Sara Sharratt, whom I've mentioned already, is Costa Rican. Early on, she invited me to come home for spring vacation and I accepted enthusiastically. We went to visit her family and nobody spoke English. She had a brother who was fourteen years old at that time, who would come home after middle school and hang out with me and teach me Spanish. He's still one of my closest friends. He became a political scientist and got a degree at Columbia University. Now he finally speaks English and I speak Spanish. Their family became my family and I began establishing my own community of feminists, academics and activists in Costa Rica. It has become my second home, in some ways my first. I've taught at the several of the universities in the country, including the United Nations campus of the University for Peace.

AR: I want to explore that a bit, but first take me back to training other people in family therapy at San José. Did your feminism influence how you were doing family therapy yet?

EK: Yes, very much so. It influenced everything I was doing. They gave me a course to teach, the community psychology course that I was teaching was about ethnicity. I immediately made it about gender and ethnicity. The department never really approved of the gender aspect, but I did it anyway.

So, I was immediately teaching about gender, race and class to the community students, and I was teaching more traditional therapy with an emphasis on the feminist approaches we were developing. I never called it feminist, just good practice. Had I named it, they would have stopped me.

It was a good program in that we had the one-way mirrors and we did it the way the early family therapists did; we walked in and interrupted the fledgling therapists. They could have immediate feedback in the same way I had been trained at the VA hospital.

AR: What were your research interests at this point? What did you feel drawn to?

EK: Well, my research interests were really in that area also. Gender and ethnicity. Since I was needing tenure, I tended to do simple and acceptable empirical analyses, attribution studies especially in the U.S. and in Costa Rica. Many of my earliest studies were published in Spanish language journals as well, so that I developed a readership in both countries.

We were doing a lot of gender role research, Sara, her brother and I standardized and normed a Latin American sexual inventory, which was similar to the Bem Sex Role Inventory. We did it in Spanish and we developed different norms. I also did several of the early studies that you probably have seen on gender bias and ratings of professors, you know we changed the first names and so on. So, I was doing that kind of gender focused research, but not yet epistemology.

AR: Were you also waiting for tenure to dive into epistemology?

EK: Yes, absolutely. I didn't want to rock the boat until I had been given my life vest. I had written an article on socio-therapy. I was criticizing clinical practice already. But I didn't really understand that it was epistemology that I was doing for a long time. I didn't exactly know what I was doing, but I was questioning everything. I wasn't precisely waiting for tenure to dive into epistemology, but I was waiting for tenure to do work that wasn't the kind of reduced empirical... I still wanted to ask the bigger questions.

AR: In terms of your teaching at this point, you were teaching a lot of different subjects, was the psychology of women or psychology of gender course that we can think of now, was that part of your armamentarium as well?

EK: No. I never taught psychology of women, because it was an undergraduate course, and I was teaching in the graduate program. I taught gender and ethnicity, and I also introduced one of the first courses in the country on professional ethics, which now also is pro forma. Around that time, 1973, they had voted homosexuality out of the DSM; by 1978 there were important revisions being proposed to the ethics manual, focusing a lot on sexual exploitation of therapy clients and students, and I got very interested in professional ethics. I had the idea that all the students should have a course in professional ethics. The Ethical Code was a little two- or three-page pamphlet in those days, saying "try not to have sex with your clients if you can help it, or wait until ten minutes after the session is over" kind of thing. I was really doing clinical training and community intervention training. Even though that had never been my intention, I never actually wanted to be a clinician.

AR: Oh okay, that begets a whole host of other questions.

[7:50]

EK: If feminism hadn't happened, I never would have become a clinician. I couldn't find what kind of psychology I wanted. I thought maybe it was personality, maybe it was social. I wanted to study the ordinary lives of people, not pathologies and the extraordinary lives, and I couldn't find it. At Ohio State, they were teaching construct theory. That's what I went there looking for. What happened finally was that I had to participate in inventing the psychology that I wanted. I'm really most interested in the theory and the epistemology of practice. I love teaching and supervising, but I don't have the right temperament to practice in psychotherapy day after day, week after week.

AR: But that said, at this point, you were still doing private practice alongside your academic work?

EK: Yes

AR: And has that been something you've always done?

EK: No, I stopped practicing in 1993 after *Engendered Lives* was published. I didn't want to practice anymore. Truth be told, I also thought I was making too much money. It's a funny thing to say, but I thought "I'm getting too motivated by the income, not by the work." So, I felt that I needed to stop and get back to what my more authentic work was. And I did.

AR: Well, I'd like to ask a little bit about *Engendered Lives*. Because it's a such an important work and I always like to get the backstory of these things. What motivated you to write it? What did you want to accomplish?

EK: I wanted to, ah, do you know the book *The Denial of Death*?

AR: No

EK: It's a sort of book that, after reading it, you see the world differently. I thought about the books that I had read in my life that changed everything for me. That was one of them, *The Denial of Death*. Instead of analyzing sexuality as Freud did, it views the knowledge of our own death as the basis of defense mechanisms. I always had the ambition to write that sort of book, one that change everything for the reader. They can't see the world the same way. I was wanting to write it and I was just waiting for my first sabbatical to do so. It didn't come out until 1992 but it was everything that I'm telling you that I thought up to 1992.

AR: And what would you say is the main message or what you want people to see the book as?

EK: I want people to question reality. Ask over and over "How do I know what I know?" Accept no authority unquestioned because all those who came before us misunderstood or ignored women's experience, along with other marginalized groups. I wanted to come back to the most fundamental questions and re-examine them in the context of our new and growing knowledge.

Secondly, I wanted to offer a woman-centered alternative to the then dominant Freudian approach.

AR: It's interesting too that you mentioned earlier that one of the reasons you were interested in psychology, but it was something that you couldn't find readily was the kind of experience of every day. The quotidian, what is the experience about? Not "abnormal experience" or "extraordinary experience" but every day. Seems to me that that also comes through a bit in the book.

EK: I hope so. The subtitle is *A New Psychology of Women's Experience*. I wanted to call it a *Psychology of the Ordinary*. The publisher said "no" because you don't put the word ordinary in a title; who's going to read that book? I wanted to know what's hidden and what's buried in the taken for granted. What's so ordinary that we don't see it anymore?

AR: Ellyn, you have been the editor of the journal *Women and Therapy*, as you mentioned, for 20 years now. Tell me how that journal got started.

EK: It was started by somebody who none of the following editors seems to know. She was a therapist who wasn't active in the women's movement. It was originally and for a long time published by Bill Cohen at Hayworth Press. Bill was very instrumental in starting a lot of our journals, including those in the area of Gay and Lesbian studies. Esther Rothblum, Ellen Cole and Marcia Hill as a cohort took over the editing of the journal. They passed it to me in 1996. Again, I'm surprised by my own longevity. I didn't think I would be still editing *Women and Therapy* 20 years later or, for that matter, still be at San José State 35 years later. It speaks of a certain stability that I had not expected of myself.

AR: Absolutely. What have been some of the highlights of your editorship?

EK: Well, I didn't want it to be focused on narrow, decontextualized clinical questions. That was not feminist therapy. And I was never going to let the focus be only middle class, white, heterosexual woman. I brought as much diversity to the journal as I could. I tried to make it transnational, not just multicultural. Looking at the differences between United States and Canadian multi-cultural approaches and then, in other cultures there are totally different categories and perceptions. I wanted a radical, not a liberal, perspective. I wanted to change the rules and the roots entirely, not just bend them to make room for some women.

Actually those values eventually created quite a public row between Jean Baker Miller and me on the topic of racism; it appeared in the *Women's Review of Books*. I have recently written a paper about whiteness, about how much we North Americans categorize people by race, by skin color. They don't do that in a lot of other countries. I tried to bring diversity and specificity to the field, while not sacrificing specificity of practice.

Secondly, I was delighted to find myself in a position to mentor a generation of feminist psychologists in writing and publishing skills. Most of them have gone on to have stellar careers that include continuing to write and publish. I read their work today with great pride and delight that I could make this contribution to them and to the field.

AR: It's amazing. I also want to ask you to tell me more about the *Feminist Therapy Institute*. You were a national chair of the FTI and I think it was in the early '90s. I really don't know very much about the *Feminist Therapy Institute*, at all. So what can you tell me?

[15:15]

EK: There was a critical mass of us doing feminist therapy by the early 1980s. We'd get together mostly at AWP and talk about what we're doing. A small group who were having these discussions called a meeting. We decided to form a group focused only on therapy, which we felt that we needed. A meeting was called and the rest is history.

AR: What did the group do? What were the main activities or objectives of it?

EK: A lot of what the group did was to encourage people to write for their first time. Many of the people who were in the *Feminist Therapy Institute* wrote the first books and did a lot of edited collections. They began by thinking, "I can't possibly write." Those of us who could showed them how. I was in a position to help them with their first publications.

So we were massively supportive of each other and produced these collective edited editions on topics. So now we didn't have to write the whole book. Just write articles on what your ideas are. Of course, we were focused on how to practice feminist therapy.

AR: Is it still in existence?

EK: No.

AR: When did it end?

EK: Sometime in the '90s. I don't recall the exact year. We started to have fewer people coming, more aligning themselves with the fields that grew from the seeds of feminism. We did also have some difficulty confronting issues of racism and diversity that were not yet ready to be resolved. They still are not entirely and will not be until the larger society gets there, but we feminist psychologists have come a long way in dealing with them in our still remaining organizations.

Nobody would say now that you don't ask about gender or ethnicity and race in therapy, but everybody would have said it then. We changed that.

AR: The last chapter in *Engendered Lives* is called a New Model of Feminist therapy. Where do you stand on the issue of does there need to be a separate thing called feminist therapy, and if so, what makes it distinct?

EK: Yes and no is my answer. It is still somewhat distinct and there's only a certain target group that will come to something called feminist therapy, so I do think you need both. I think you need feminist therapy for people who want that, and you need it fully mainstreamed as we call it now, because otherwise other people are doing unethical practice. It's just simply unethical not to believe what somebody says, not to consider gender, race and ethnicity, class.

I don't know if I would start being a therapist now with all the paperwork, and the reporting and everything that one has to do, the third-party payment and all; it's a totally different and perhaps over-regulated profession.

You could never do now what we did then. Therapy is too infused with the forces of big pharma and the insurance industry. I don't think many people identify as a feminist therapists anymore. They do intersubjectivity, relational or self-psychology. And it's possible to do it because it integrates feminist principles in so many places. Sadly, feminist therapy does not have a far enough reach because of the still too prevalent cultural fear of feminism.

AR: Right. It's really important for us to recognize that that was the trajectory.

EK: In 1978, we feminist therapists had to insist that women be included in the diagnosis of PTSD, because the diagnosis was just going to be for men, for the veterans of the American War in Vietnam. Even in that struggle, a lot of the original work was done by feminist therapists.

AR: Absolutely. You know, on this topic of naming something feminist therapy versus using the principles, but not calling it that, I recall reading in one of your autobiographical pieces that for a long time you were teaching, you were teaching feminist ideas but you were not calling them that. I wondered why. Why did you feel that you shouldn't use the F-word at the time?

EK: I'm nefarious, that's my strategy. I don't know if anybody else would do that, but I knew all what would come down on me at San Jose State if I called what I was doing feminist. I was sure to be told that I couldn't teach it something so political. So, I just went around it all and did what I wanted to do. You didn't say the F word in those days or you just got attacked mercilessly. So, my strategy was just to teach it without labeling it. A lot of students came back to me years later and they just thought I was teaching them good therapy, which I was, but that's how I did it. Even then we see these women in counseling services who decided not to use the word feminist in the title, for a similar reason. Because we thought we were just going to get trashed and attacked, and we didn't want to waste our energy fighting that.

AR: Right, yeah. That's interesting. I have very mixed feelings about that myself. Language is powerful, and obviously does work in the world and you don't want that to get in the way of what you're trying to do, but on the other hand, language is powerful. Language is important too, so I think it's a fraught issue.

EK: I haven't resolved the conflict even in myself, but I decided I had to act.

AR: That's right. One of the things that has been on my mind a lot lately, partly because of what's been happening in the FDA and so on, and the recent approval of "female Viagra" is the medicalization of female sexuality and Leonore Tiefer's work, and I know that you worked with Leonore on an edited collection, the New View. Can you tell me how that collaboration came about?

EK: Sure. Leonore was trying to organize people to do the original work of the New View group. She came here to California to organize a group with the help of Marny Hall and I went to that

meeting. It's another one of those "I happened to be there" situations. They were talking about how they were going to affect the larger public and how they were going to get this material out. And I said, "Excuse me, I am the editor of a journal; we can do a special issue." And Leonore and I got together and did the special issue. And most of the people that wrote in it were at that meeting, and sexuality was their issue. That's one of the things that I've been able to do with the journal that was good. An important issue needed to get out to many others and I was able to make that happen.

AR: That's really reflected in, when I was reading through the special issues and I thought, wow, you've been able to capture some really, such a wide range, first of all. But things that you need a little bit of nimbleness, you need to be able to say "let's do that now."

EK: I would accomplish that by going to conferences, going to meetings, and seeing who is working on the cutting edge of an issue, maybe just beginning to think about it. I would help them to further that issue. Currently we have one issue coming out on whiteness and white privilege, and an issue on sex trafficking.

AR: Oh, great

EK: You know, those are the things that need to be considered right now, I think. I was given a lot of power and I tried to use it well and ethically.

AR: You've had a longstanding interest in race. And obviously race, ethnicity and now you're working with Andrea Dottolo on whiteness. Can you encapsulate what you see as your contribution to understanding race, ethnicity and psychology?

EK: I think my contribution to the area, the epistemology of race, has been to participate in deconstructing American racist ideas. My article with Dottolo is about how racialization came from slavery and not the other way around. It's very clear in the literature that a group of white men introduced slavery. They basically decided that they wouldn't enslave the Irish because the Irish were white. It created a hierarchy. The hierarchy allowed white people to feel superior to the other group.

I got interested in racism in two important ways. The first strong influence was the job I had in Washington DC, in inner city segregated schools. I didn't have a political analysis when I went to work there, and I saw how racist it was, what we were doing. The clients were all inner-city Black kids. They did not speak the English that I spoke, and they were getting trapped into something I could not yet name, something the culture had not yet made visible. Now my analysis would say they were being directed from school to prison. Frankly, I was innocent enough to be shocked. I couldn't think of what to do about it. So, what I did, I think the statute of limitations is up so I've started telling the story. I burned all my files when I left the job. I took all my files some place and burned them. I thought, I'm not telling anybody about this but I'm not contributing to the racism either.

AR: Yeah. So that data could not be used against your clients.

EK: Exactly. The files were 2 years of about 3 test batteries per day. I didn't tell anybody about it for a long time. I did it because it was the only thing that I could think of to do. I was one of the only white people working there. At the time my analysis was these people who are Black think it's an okay thing to do and I don't, so what am I going to do? So that's what I did.

The second thing was, since I happened to be bicultural and bilingual in the wrong direction, I don't qualify for the multicultural stuff. For a number of years, I was active in Latina feminist organizations, and I was always marginalized. They were like, you're a white person. I started to think deeply about what it meant. What is a white person? What is a Latina? And the other thing is, just experientially, a lot of my friends from Costa Rica think that they're white. The minute they come to the United States and get off the plane they are not white anymore.

So just from that perspective I began to see the arbitrariness of the system and the epistemology underlying it; the way that racial categories, I think, perpetuate racism. I don't think you can eradicate – you can't say I'm color blind – I don't think you can eradicate what's happened to people in the name of racism, but you can understand where it comes from and try to work against it. Just like you can ask men to work against masculinity, you can ask everybody to work against the racist system. So that's sort of where my work has been.

AR: Well, I'd love to ask you now about your most recent book that just came out, *Sight Unseen*, because it is about the ways in which race is seen and not seen. Tell me a little bit about how this book came about?

EK: Chapter three in *Engendered Lives* is about the legend of Oedipus as adapted and popularized by Freud. That was the last chapter I wrote. I was almost finished, and suddenly for some reason I started re-reading the trilogy, which is mostly about Antigone and not about Oedipus at all, and I thought "This fits perfectly." I'm going to re-write the Oedipus complex. I did it primarily to show how a different perspective that makes gender visible leads to an entirely different psychology. I didn't expect psychoanalysts to adopt it as part of their analysis, but I understand why many of them have: the Antigone complex. So, part of the Oedipus story is that he blinds himself to punishing himself for the sin of incest.

He says, "It's all right, I have a daughter and Antigone's eyes are my eyes." And I took that as emblematic of the fathers owning their daughters' bodies in all the ways that they do in patriarchy. "I have access to my daughter's body; it belongs to me. I can look at it, comment on it or do even more if I so desire".

Once I related the issue of male entitlement to blindness, I began to think, "What about people who are really blind? They can't see all these qualities to judge, as most of them are visual. It was another path of epistemology and ethnomethodology. I wrote it many years ago. I was sick for a long time and couldn't work, so I finished it much later than I had expected. I actually started doing the research shortly after I published *Engendered Lives*.

AR: Well, for those who haven't yet read your book, can you describe, give them a taste of what the actual research was? It's an ethnographic study, but what did you actually do?

EK: What I did was go and hang out with a bunch of blind people of different races and genders and so forth. Rather than interview them, I'm not a fan of self report and interviews, because people tell you what they want to tell you. So I spent enough time with them so that I got to see what I thought was going on, not [limited to] what they tell me. [31:34]

I basically spent hundreds of hours of hanging out with blind people in many different venues. We weren't sitting and doing traditional interviews. We went to museums; we went shopping; we did everything together. My graduate students did some of the study in the beginning, but I had to eventually take it over because I needed to see for myself.

What I did from the beginning was to make sure that the students and I would do something for the blind person, a quid pro quo. "Don't sit and interview them. Take them to Costco: let them to do some of what they need also. For example, you have no idea what it's like to go food shopping if you're blind. Someone has to tell you what is on each shelf, what the prices are and any other information you might need. Someone has to translate from the sighted language for you.

So, I've been to many places with blind people, and I got as deeply their lives as I could. I tried to do it as naively as possible, not with pre-conceived theoretical ideas. I listened to what they told me and then slowly my experience began to deepen.

The idea began to present itself to me that vision is a language that we call learn prior to the verbal. And part of the reason why it is so difficult for people to figure out their racism and their sexism is because it's embedded in the way they see; it's not verbal. It's unconscious. You don't have easy access to the idea that a woman is this and a man is that, or a white person is this and a black person is that. I started to see what it meant not to have that language. With the cross-cultural background that I have, I started to see what I thought I could call translating. They were learning sighted language. They could say back to me things like, "The sunset must be beautiful" even though they had no idea what a sunset even was. And then they'd start to tell me, I want to be able to pass in the sighted world, so I'll learn the language. I was being so careful not to say, "See you later" and then they would start saying it, and I would say "Why are you saying see you later? You're not going to see me later?" This kind of comment was after we had established enough of a relationship to allow it.

And the answer began to emerge. "I want to sound like I speak the same language as you." I started to realize that they were passing. You know, like a light-skinned Black person or like a Jewish person learns to pass. You learn the cues, the codes and you behave accordingly. What I was really getting to was the blindness of sighted people. I was trying to show how blind we all are, that we get told something, and because of the way our brains work, it has is relegated to the unconscious, organizing impressions into patterns and the ones you don't need all the time the brain makes unconscious. And the unconscious I thought was the repository of a lot of sexism, racism, homophobia, all those things we are trying to work on.

AR: What was the most surprising experience you had as you moved into this new world of relationships with blind people?

EK: The thing that I was focused on for a long time was my own experience. I decided that I'd make that central and look at my own sighted dependence. How much I prepare when I dress for a meeting, for example, even though I've written against it so much. I wanted to look professional. Do I want to look like this, do I want to look like that? It actually took me a while to realize that the blind didn't have the slightest idea what I was wearing. I mean to really realize it. My students realized before I did and they started going in sweats. I can't bring myself to do a professional interview in sweats.

Also, how important eyes count in establishing and maintaining relationships for me. These blind people talked a lot about falling in love without vision and I couldn't imagine it for myself. I can't even imagine flirting with somebody if you can't look into their eyes. The most ordinary things again.

AR: Well, one of the concepts that you have used a lot in your work is something called "a mattering map." Can you tell me what that is exactly?

EK: It's an idea that I first introduced in *Engendered Lives*, a number of years before the construct of intersectionality; it is somewhat similar, but not identical. With my students, I generated a list of all the cultural and contextual variables that we thought affected somebody in psychotherapy, and so their race, gender, ethnicity, class, finances, etc. I asked them when they're working with somebody to draw a map of all these issues as they saw the case. I instructed beginning therapists to draw their own maps and then to have the clients draw theirs. Done it over time, traced both changes and different values and perceptions, providing an important touchstone to eliminate biases of the therapist in context.

In community and human rights work in Costa Rica, I ask teach trainee first to have each person in the group draw their own mattering map. Is gender central or is it peripheral? Are finances central? You can then place them over each other, and you see that you might have totally different values and a different focus than the people with whom you are working and maybe they from each other as well. My concept of the mattering map is that it's fluid and it morphs slowly or rapidly with each interchange perhaps. So, they have to learn how to conceptualize it after writing because it can change in a second.

AR: And it may also be mutable according to just the situation you're in, the kind of environmental cues are, to make different things more salient than other things.

EK: Exactly. I used the phrase because I like the word 'mattering' better than 'meaning.' Because it's more mind-heart than meaning is. Meaning is an existential, masculine idea that is very dry. But, mattering is in every cell of your body, it's not just up here (pointing at head).

AR: Right, even the fact that things matter to you.

EK: It works very well with matter, with materials. The idea is that mattering subsumes matter, that matter is morphed by mattering.

AR: Right, that's great. I'm going to go back to my interview protocol now and ask some of the things we really would like all of our participants to at least think about, whether they're as relevant to you or not, and these are kind of more general questions and reflection questions.

You've been involved in the field of psychology and psychotherapy, for several decades. What would you say have been the biggest successes of feminism in psychology and/or psychotherapy? Where have the greatest inroads been, would you say?

EK: I think in some of the places that I've already been described, in making gender visible, in treating women with respect, in the field of trauma. I think narrative therapy comes a lot from feminism. Anything that is relational and intersubjective. I think we've made a tremendous impact on the field, but it has been invisibilized to a great extent.

AR: Where do you think maybe there's more resistance? Or there could still be room for a feminist analysis?

EK: I don't think there has been enormous resistance. Instead there has been a tendency to subsume our ideas and not acknowledge them as feminist. There is still a ridiculous amount of resistance to feminism itself in society.

I think one of the things that we did that was also important was to educate consumers about how to choose therapists.

AR: Absolutely. Psychologists who are now coming into the field, people you train and so on, what advice would you give them to kind of navigate psychology as a stated or unstated feminist?

EK: Well, I think first and foremost to learn the history of feminist psychology, to know the shoulders that they stand on and to understand where they can pick up our work rather than redoing it. Then to ask epistemological questions themselves, not to accept the field as it is taught as if someone handed down the tablets from on high. There's a lot of room for new theory and practice to decolonize the field.

AR: Well, would you mind elaborating on that because it's something I'm really quite concerned about, in fact. About the idea that American psychology specifically is so intent on exporting these training models with absolutely no concern for local cultures, traditional practices, and with the idea that it's kind of one size fits all and we're going to make money basically. It's really quite shameful given the other approach, which is about in fact, being sensitive to issues of culture, race and ethnicity. That's such an important part of American psychology, then to just ignore it in other parts of the world.

EK: It has been part of American psychology because some of s and some of the people in those groups have insisted upon it. And the problem is that you're going some places where people don't necessarily have the power to insist. And a lot of times you see people just doing an assembly line, one size fits all kind of therapy. CBT for everyone! I think you sit with people

first and learn what their lives are. Then, you don't import a model and attempt to apply it. And that's harder to do, you make a lot less money if you have to hang out to get to know the people.

AR: Which is just the crux of the matter, isn't it?

EK: Yes, it is the crux of the matter, hanging out enough to really get to know the people. I did a group in Costa Rica for women with cancer. Since the tourism industry has become stronger, there's a huge increase in breast cancer in women. In cleaning hotel rooms, women are now exposed to many toxic chemicals. Not that I'm totally inside the culture, but inside enough that I understand the different ways we approach the issues here.

AR: When you assess your career so far, what would you say are the things that you're most proud of? Your most important contributions, the ones you feel most proud of?

EK: It's hard to choose because no one part stands without the others. If I had to choose, I would probably say the writing and the editing. That's just because I so enjoy writing and also because it will last beyond me.

AR: That it will go on for generations.

EK: It's my bias from the beginning. If it's in a book it will last forever.

AR: Would you say that at any point in your career you did have mentors?

EK: Um, I would say that in particular roles, like when I was on the Committee for Women in Psychology. People helped me learn what I had to do in those circumstances. I was fortunate to be mentored by Nancy Russo, Carolyn Payton, and Florence Denmark. In contrast, I would say that I learned to publish by writing articles and sending them in to a journal. If they were rejected, they'd tell me what was wrong and I'd fix it and send it to another journal until I got the hang of it. And teaching, unfortunately you learn by doing. Hopefully I got better over the years.

AR: So, learning by doing more than anything.

EK: Yes.

AR: Well, is there anything that I haven't asked about any aspect of your life and your career that we haven't really touched on? That you think would be an important part of the story?

EK: You know my whole life now!

AR: So, well you know, no other part of your life that you'd like to share for the record?

EK: Well, the only other thing that I'd say is that I missed a lot of potentially productive years because I was too sick, and I was given a terminal diagnosis. Stubbornly, I kept writing all those short articles. Now I'm going back and I am picking up the pieces. I feel like in a way I'm making up for lost time. You can expect to see ten new books in the next two years.

AR: Amazing, amazing.

EK: That was the only interruption, right in the middle of my career.

AR: Here you are, you made it through. Looking back, this is kind of an existential question, but what impact did that have on you?

EK: Oh, that would take another whole hour. A tremendous impact. It changed almost everything that I do. I don't know how to say it briefly, but I have a very strong Buddhist practice. So that was part of what got me through. I learned to live each day, not knowing what's going to be there tomorrow. It made it hard for me to do long-term projects and still does to some extent. It made for a whole different way of living, understanding other people and appreciating myself. I softened a lot. I felt and still feel that I was given a second chance. I want to be sure not to waste it, to work and to love as deeply as I can. I think of my life as before and after.

AR: That's a huge impact.

EK: It was huge. Imagine you're always ready to die the next day. But days have gone by, and I'm still here.

AR: Wow. So these are, it sounds like learning how to cope with this and deal with this has impacted how you live now, in kind of seeing the world.

EK: It impacts every minute and every day. Mostly positively.

AR: Well good. I'm aware that we've been about an hour and a half now, so I want to thank you so much for your willingness to participate and share your story, your work and your life, with us, and I'll stop the recording now.