Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Eva Magnusson

Interviewed by Alexandra Rutherford, Axelle Karera, and Kate Sheese
Newport, RI
March 13, 2009

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

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EM: Interviewee (Eva Magnusson)
AR: Interviewer (Alex Rutherford)
AK: Interviewer (Kate Sheese)
KS: Interviewer (Kate Sheese)

KS: Usually, we get people to start by just stating their name, their place and date of birth for the record.

EM: Okay, I am Eva Magnusson. I say that in Swedish. I work at the University of Umeâ in the North of Sweden. I was born the 21st of September 1947.

KS: And where were you born?

EM: In **Lycksele** which is in the north of Sweden. In **Lappland**, yeah. Lots of reindeers (Laughs).

KS: One of our first questions, generally, is if you could tell us a bit about the emergence of your feminist identity. How did that come about for you?

EM: Yeah, I have thought about that, not because you have asked me, but one does get that question. I am not sure I ever had any other identity. But I do have a very, very specific issue around which my activism emerged. I do not know if that was visible on my CV, but I was one of the people who started the Swedish – not league – Association to improve breastfeeding. It doesn't sound very feminist but it was for us. I know here you have the La Leche League that was anything but feminist, but in Sweden it was a bunch of academic mothers who got together and decided we wanted to take our breasts back from the doctors. And that was in 1973. That was really the sort of practical start for me. So for us it was very much a political issue. And something to do with not being sort of being bound up in the medical establishment, it was all about that. It was not about this body stuff, the other sort of you know, no and [it was about] organizing. Of course, it is a big thing. And being seen and getting in newspapers, and that kind of stuff. Yeah. So your question is easy to answer: I have always been a feminist, but it sort of started seriously, practically in 1973.

KS: Having always been a feminist, what are some examples from maybe your early life of how, how did you live out that identity as a young person?

EM: You know the word "feminist" didn't exist in Sweden in those days. I couldn't have had that kind of an identity. That was impossible. But I remember, I have sort of silly memories. Sitting in a bus when I was about 11 and hearing some people behind me

saying: "You know there are some girls who don't really play with dolls a lot. I am so worried about what was going to happen with them." There I was, not playing with dolls! {2:56} And also at school, I was the girl who did the odd things. Studying lots of mathematics, lots of physics, lots of biology, and all that kind of stuff, because I just did. Wanted to. And we were four girls and 25 boys, or something. And that, it wasn't exactly a feminist identity, but the sense of transgressing boundaries was always very, very near. So it's that kind of thing. And, of course, the whole thing about heterosexuality. I am a heterosexual woman, as far as I know. I've been married once, have two children and divorced. But that was after the breastfeeding thing, but that was a very, very important thing for me. Realizing that this relation[ship] is not really for my sake and getting out of it. I mean it was really low-key, nothing very dramatic, but still really sort of… So I think my sort of activity… no. My awareness, consciousness, in those days was very un-theoretical. It was very much about experiences. Noticing transgressions, being transgressed on and so on. I was at graduate school in psychology then at Uppsala, at the University there, doing psychophysiology and psychosomatics, nothing to do with gender. But after I started, after the divorce basically, a friend of mine, who went through her coming-out process at that time – I came out of my marriage and she came out – started actually doing feminist psychology at the University of Uppsala, we started little courses and our dissertations just fell apart! So we started other dissertations really. And yeah, and doing a feminist dissertation sort of in the middle/end of the 1970s at Uppsala University. It was less possible than it is today, but it isn't very possible today either, I have to tell you.

KS: You have written a bit about feminist psychology in Sweden and the problems with that –

EM: Yeah, we did that Nordic issue of *Feminism and Psychology*

AR: We have really used that a lot in our group.

EM: Yeah, and I've also actually written a textbook, a Swedish textbook called *Psychology and Gender: From gender to sex differences*. I think I had a translation in the CV. And there's lots to do. Oh my goodness. But, what was your question?

AR: Tell us about the evolution of feminism in Sweden and how this all intersects and the construction of –

EM: Oh, now we are moving out of psychology –

AR: You can go back and forth if you want to.

EM: Yeah, you know, but there isn't that much overlap. Feminism in Sweden, you know up to about 1970, between 1975 and 1980, the women's movement, people in the women's movement, people like me would never use the word "feminism." It was seen either way back in the 1900s with the suffrage movement, that kind of stuff. Or, those bourgeois Americans. Because feminism in the women's movement in Sweden has a

really very, very strong basis in socialist feminism, though we didn't call it "feminism." {6:27} So I think all of us, I mean I was active in the left movement, in the Socialist movement in Sweden. At the same time as we did this breastfeeding thing and so on. And then becoming a serious feminist, you left the socialist movement. That sort of didn't compute really. Yeah.

AR: How were women treated? Sorry.

EM: It was the same as here, you know the socialist movement, yes and labourers and all that, but not women.

KS: Right.

EM: So there were breakout organizations like, the one I was a part of was called the "Swedish Left Women's something," I can't translate it. But anyway. So it sort of was a Socialist movement, but it was just women and it was connected to the major socialist party, not the Social Democrats, the more leftist, but only loosely. So I would say that feminism in Sweden, the women's movement in Sweden, is very, very much based in labour. You know the labour-capital relations, all that kind of stuff. Lots of Marxist superstructure.

KS: Which is interesting because you have written a lot about occupational health and –

EM: Yeah, yeah, yeah yeah.

KS: So that is interesting.

EM: Yes and also actually psychology in Sweden, there isn't clinical, it has a lot about work and work-family issues. I mean really. And I think it has to do with our very strong labour unions and this, also of course the women's movement, you know moving along. And their very strong position on almost every part of life. Where Swedish society is really run by agreements between employers and labour unions, so much is being done that way. So that of course makes life circulate a lot around work, somehow. It's funny really, how that is so typical. I notice lots of things there are laws about here. I have lived in Holland and I have lived in Norway and there are laws about things, and we have agreements between labour unions and employers instead. So yeah, that's really strong. And, of course, it also colours the feminist movement.

{8:48}

KS: In what kinds of ways do you think it's specifically socialist?

EM: The way it began, this socialist thing and the very, very great focus on work. I mean paid work. That's what I mean. And on affirmative action stuff in workplaces and such things. There's been lots of stuff done.

KS: And so in the earlier years, where you're starting to bring feminism into your psychological work, you're saying it wasn't as easy to do when you first started. What was it like? What were the kind of barriers and challenges or responses?

EM: Well, I can tell you that I have a dissertation lying in my drawer that never got finished. I've got a number of articles published, you saw them at the bottom of my CV. But there never was a dissertation. And I decided, I mean this wasn't just about feminism, but to a great extent, it really was. Because it was about that and actually my supervisor he was developing severe alcohol problems and you know the kind of psychosis you can get when you are too far gone or something. So he wasn't very easy to work with. I started to think, maybe it's time to really get real here, get a job as a psychologist. Which I did have that training, so I could go on to get that first, what do you call them here? Internship, and so I did. I left Uppsala in 1978 to become a psychologist and that was to a great extent because the dissertation just wasn't going to happen and my supervisor. I think he actually died by then. It sounds really dramatic and, of course, in a sense it was. But I got a good job, [Laughs] but I left the academy. I came back in '91, I think, to Umeâ Universality. Having worked with a lot labour issues, work occupation stuff as a psychologist in the meantime. So getting my feminism into my psychology didn't work the first time. Not in terms of dissertation. In terms of teaching and in terms of that kind of stuff, yeah it did. We started, we had, my friends and me, I think it was the first course Sweden on the psychology of women, in 1978 or something. And that's a kind of anecdote connected with that, because when you… We have another system that you have here. In Sweden it isn't one person who has their own course. You get together and you have a course for say two months, full time and you have to apply to a board to be allowed to do that. And so we did that and we got a "No," "No way. You can't have a course that is only about half the human population." "Imagine," they say, "if you were to do that we'd have to give courses on the psychology of disability! Or, the psychology of immigrants!" and we say "Fine, go do it!" So that was in 1978, but we fought it and got through, so we did the first psychology of women course in Sweden.

AR: What were you drawing on for the material at that point?

EM: Hanne Haavind is one, who I really think you should talk to. And then the rest of it was American. I mean there wasn't… Some American books trickle across the Atlantic. There was no internet in those days. So it took time to find books. You know, once you got hold of a colleague you could converse with her, so word of mouth I would say, much. And Jeanne Baker Miller was good at getting, that isn't theory, hardly even psychology, but sort of. Nancy Chodorow, of course. Juliet Mitchell. Some of those early textbooks like, Juanita Williams. Florence Denmark. And then, of course, articles, I mean the library systems existed so one could find people like Sandra Bem, all those clinicians. Broverman. I think more or less the same stuff people would have used here. I think so, and then I think there was some local stuff. Some social psychologists, sociologists, who did work on work-family relations in the Nordic countries, that was also possible to use. Harriet Holter, a Norwegian who, unfortunately she is dead now but she would really, she is a very, really important foremother for feminists in the social

sciences. She is Norwegian. Yeah, that is probably not all that different, but with a sprinkling of you know social history, social sciences more generally. There were some sociologists who were earlier in the Nordic countries.

KS: And what was the interest like from the students? What was their reactions at this time?

EM: In the 70s we did this course perhaps three times. Well, you know enthusiasm. The ones who took that kind of course, it wasn't mandatory or anything like that. So people were, yeah. But the rest of the department weren't particularly interested. We were three of us doing this. Which was important. I believe in numbers.

AR: What was the gender composition in psychology like at that time, in the late 70s?

EM: Well, there were hardly any full professors who were women, there were a couple actually. You know the kind of women I wonder how, you must have these kinds of women here too, who seem to, seem like tanks, they roll over anything and there they are. We had a couple like those. They're retired by now. But apart from that, there were just men. And the people who taught us, when I was a student at the end of the 60s, were basically only men. So there was a slow increase and I checked a few years ago, perhaps five years ago, maybe a little more, and found that psychology, in Sweden as a whole, looking at full professors was actually slightly below, I think, the average of social sciences in Sweden, or just bordering. Which is strange considering the number of women who actually study psychology compared to political science or... So it is not good, actually.

KS: And what drew you to psychology?

{16:17}

EM: I've often wondered. That's so weird, I was choosing between studying technology actually, you know physics and psychology and medicine. But the reason I wanted to study medicine was because I would like to be a psychiatrist. I can't imagine, nowadays I wouldn't dream of wanting to be a … but it was different then. Psychiatrists did therapy and stuff like that. They didn't just do medicine. And then, of course, becoming a psychiatrist was an enormously long education. You had to become a doctor first. And a psychologist in those days took three years. And my background, I don't have any academic background at all. Actually, my generation I have a couple of cousins who are slightly older than me, we were the first to have gone above junior high school. So that means I had no one in my family to ask, and not really many people around me in the little town where I grew up. But the reason why I study psychology, I think it is a kind of a double thing. I am really interested in knowing things. In research, in finding out, empirical stuff. But I don't think that's sort of, it isn't just about psychological things. And I notice that when I do psychology I tend to spread out. And then of course, like so many other people who had read some Freud in high school and you become fascinated by that. {17:58} That is really a seduction thing isn't it? Reading *The Psychopathology*

of Everyday Life and that kind of stuff. I guess we read it in school. It isn't easy to answer, actually. I think it is a combination of sort of wanting to be a kind of scientist or something like that. But backing off this technology stuff. And those two are not necessarily connected. But I wanted to do, the other thing I wanted to do, was I wanted to do graduate school with technology and physics and there weren't any women doing that. So I sort of, I think I couldn't fathom, I couldn't picture myself there. So that is another part of it. Psychology, there were lots of women taking psychology, so that was easier [to imagine]. And that was not conscious. That's an after-construction for me. It was totally not conscious. At all. So that is not a good answer to your question, so I don't believe that we often make these total rational, thought-through decisions. And I am sure I would be able to make up one but –

KS: You don't need to make up answers, that is a great one.

EM: Yeah, and then of course doing psychology in Sweden in those days is just behaviorism. So after one year I just quit, it was so boring. Went to work in a mental hospital as an orderly for half a year and that was so fascinating. So I went back, but then instead of taking psychology I took anthropology, which was wonderfully fascinating. Even in those days. Which was, that was, more or less like the old, all those interesting new people hadn't sort of come around yet then. And then I realized that having a little psychology and having a little anthropology, you're never going to get a job. So, I went back to finish my psychology degree, so that I could work as a psychologist. And then, I got recruited into research by a professor, into a graduate position. I don't think I would have gone on otherwise, I mean probably would have tried to go on. But he [motions pulling in] yeah.

KS: And this brings up the issue of mentorship. Did this person serve as a mentor?

EM: No, he didn't, I had others. He was the bigwig in the department actually and hypo-manic most the time and, you know, starting things all over the place. But I got a lab and interesting equipment and got interesting "do this," and of course then I did it in my own way. That was fun. Oh yeah.

KS: And so who were your mentors?

{21:08}

EM: In the early days they were psycho-physiologists. There is a guy who is now a bigwig in Sweden called **Henri Hermann** {21:22}, who was sort of an up and coming guy in our department. He had a group of people around him and I sort of socialized with them. We were in the same building and shared labs and table tennis in the lunch hour, that kind of stuff. There was a lot of mentoring going on that way I think. We were like 10 people all doing psycho-physiology in the same building, that is a very heady environment to be in, really. We were each other's mentors. All of us. That was fun.

AR: Did you have any feminist mentors, ever?

EM: Well, Hanne Haavind was one, another one was Mona Eliasson, who actually has spent a year in Toronto at York, yeah. In, I think, '93.

AR: I was just there.

EM: Yeah so if she travels, she is someone you should talk to. And – oh yes, of course! Lots of feminist mentors. Not so many psychologists though. Because the feminists in the academy in Sweden have not very often been psychologists, no. So I am very glad that I found a few names very early. Like Hanne and Harriet Holter who I mentioned and then Mona, and then of course **Pierce**. But in terms of foremothers, like mentors, there haven't been many. Most of them were sociologists. And its sort of okay, they are useful too [Laughs] even though they are not psychologists. Most of them [are from a] slightly older generation.

KS: And what about your family? You were one of the first people in your family to go beyond junior high, what were their perceptions of what you were doing? Were there women in your family who served as feminist mentors?

EM: No, no. But I don't think they've ever been aware in that way. But sort of like a cliché, strong women. My grandmother is someone I really revere. So I think I grew up in an environment with my mother and her two sisters who were very, very central. And their husbands, nice guys. I mean bright and all that, but they weren't in anyway towering, if you see what I mean. So the centre of this extended family is definitely these three women and their mother. Oh yeah. Very encouraging, but not directed. My mother or father have never tried to point me to a particular thing to do. So I think that's part of making it easy to sort of cut loose and become a feminist, no one's been trying to [motions pulling in]… I was also the first person in my family, extended family, to get a divorce in 1975. That's not nice. I mean we come from the North of Sweden where you sort of… People are not poor, but traditions stay a little bit longer, when you are not in the big city. So 1975, that was early to be getting a divorce. I had two kids then too, single mother, that kind of thing.

KS: And this divorce seems to be this kind of landmark in terms of you orienting yourself more towards feminist research, am I understanding that correctly?

EM: No, that took a little bit longer. 1977 I would say. By '77 I would say my life circumstances had stabilized. I did work all through that time, oh yes, but this sort of directing towards thinking, you know, my feminism was one thing and my work was another for several years.

{25:35}

There was no way they could connect. I used to use the Xerox machine in the basement of our, you know that ink thing that one did, to duplicate, to print our newsletter for this breast feeding organization. So there was one little connection, but apart from that, they

were two different things. But then in 1977, when we started this course thing, and a friend of mine and me started actually doing some research on the side. That's when things started to come together and I started to realize you could do psychology and be a feminist *in* psychology. That hadn't been, hadn't seemed possible earlier.

AR: Tell us about that period then when you – after the attempt at the dissertation that got put in a box in the basement – and you entered a different phase in terms of your career, in terms of working, can you tell us a little bit first of all about what were you doing in that period?

EM: Yeah. I did, actually, two different things for about two years. I worked as a psychologist in the children's health organization, which is a public organization in Sweden, up in the north of Sweden. And the work there was a lot to do with consulting with daycare centers, and with parents of small children, with you know beginning behavioural problems, that kind of stuff. And a little bit of testing for memory and cognitive stuff with children who were, sort of, bordering. But I got interested in the organizational stuff, yeah. And also daycare centers are fascinating organizations. In Sweden, they are all public. Very few private. But anyways, so they belong to a larger organization, which we then report on. So after having done that for a couple of years I got more or less recruited to the local university, which is a technical university where they had a big department for work sciences, where they wanted psychologists. And there was one there and they wanted more, so I started working there, working with what we call psycho-social work environment. And that wasn't exactly feminist, but it was a sort of, you know, moving in that direction. I was there for a few years, but then I wanted to work practically with this kind of occupational health-work organizational issues. So I started work as a psychologist in a place that works with occupational health issues. And that's actually the place where I felt that I could do some integration of practical feminist knowledge and all kinds of little things.

KS: Can you give some examples of the ways that you were integrating those things?

EM: Well I remember doing – we did a lot of things when you sort of map organizations, how they function and so on and problems there are. The way you, I mean you can sort of bend that kind of mapping and study in many ways. I think I was able to put in some more questions around women's issues, around equality issues in that way. And then I was recruited to do some specific things having to do with women in some of these big organizations, where I really interviewed people and put together data on that, which then people could use to create change. So it was a lot about that to begin with. And then, of course, individual people with problems. Having someone who was actually able to think about, not just standard issue, but also about feminist issues. I think I sort of…clinically actually you could say, even though this was not about psychiatry, you could help people find ways to get on. So both in sort of preventative, because the first thing, the mapping thing would be preventative, it isn't research exactly but sort of bordering. And that's preventative and then helping people having problems in their workplaces and also helping people to think about more than just the workplace, think about what is outside it and how these things go together and sometimes I help people to find ways to change

things, like change their working hours to make things fit with the rest of life. But that is sort of un-theoretical, very practical, very basic and it was more about me being aware of these things and not at all about preaching. How to be very low key and that. Or even trying to convince or anything like that. But actually in that period was when we had moved to Umeâ, which is where I now live. Through friends again, people recruited me to go to lectures and stuff in the local women's studies centre and actually I have started two women's studies centers. I forgot that. One in Uppsala with my friend **Sandra** who we did these courses, and one at **Luleå** {31:17} in that technical university. I think that was quite the thing, to start a women's studies centre at a technical university. That was fun.

KS: Well tell us about that, what was that like?

AR: There's not much to tell except that we actually did. Again, a number of friends, mathematicians, statisticians, me the psychologist, and a sociologist, and someone in systems analysis, you know people from all kinds of, which was really fascinating – yeah! – got together and decided we need to do something here. So I stepped away to the big Dean of the technical faculty and said we wanted some money, and we got some. We didn't have a clue what we were going to do, but he was feeling large and benign so [Laughs].

KS: What were some of the reasons you got together? I mean, it just seems so surprising to me that, you know, statistician, mathematician. What were some of the reasons that brought you together?

EM: The main, well there were two reasons. Those of us who were in the work sciences department. There were sociologists and a couple of psychologists and then there was the sociology department also. We were interested in research issues, I mean more scholarly, but the rest of the women in this place, there were quite a few, they were interested in affirmative action stuff, legal issues, that kind of thing. So it was sort of a dual thing, I'd have to say. Women come together to organize, to make demands, more that kind of thing. But also a kind of, you know, sort of nice academic quiet consciousness-raising thing. So that was sort of double. But then when we moved to Umeâ I started, sort of becoming affiliated with the women's studies centre there even when I worked as a psychologist. And I think that is what got me interested in doing academic work again. Yeah. So in about 10 years after that, in 1991, I was back, but back but *in* a university again, working as an associate professor in psychology, doing feminist research. Isn't that uncommon I have noticed [Laughs].

AK: I have a feeling there is a very minimal feminist presence in psychology in Sweden and I was wondering the causes behind it, and I like the way you refer to the national discourse about gender equality as a kind of propaganda. How does that propaganda inform the reluctance to take up feminist discourse in academia?

{33:25}

EM: Well I've thought about that a lot, I have to say. But you weren't finished.

AK: It seems like, I have a feeling, like okay, if people think there is some kind of equality and that propaganda is so present in people's attitude toward the way they arrange their life and so on, I would think academics would think "oh, well, this is not an issue because we have gone past that." Is a cause of that minimal presence?

EM: It is difficult to talk about causes, but I have thought about this a lot. It could be part of it, but seriously I think it's to do with psychology. I think so. I think the way we, as a discipline, construct what we mean by knowledge, how you can acquire knowledge, who can have knowledge, and all those epistemological issues and moral, moralist issues, is what does it. And Sweden is a small country so we don't have that many universities and you know how smallness can have a kind of in-breeding effect? They have all been pretty similar, the psych departments. I mean in the '60s there were a few weird psychoanalysts. I mean other people thought they were weird, they may have been. But the rest of them were really behaviorists, now of course they are dying out, but you know, it takes time. Now, I think that has left a legacy that is still there. I mean the methodological imperative – is that one of Kurt Danziger's expressions? –it still operates. Seriously. And it means, I have very, very concrete experiences of this, because a few years back, I think it was in 2006 and 2007, I was asked – I don't know how it happened in the same period – by all the other universities in Sweden that actually have graduate psychology programs, that train psychologists, clinical psychologists, I was asked to come and give seminars with faculty on gender issues in psychology. And my sense after having done that was sort of just confirmed this idea. Because I notice it is possible to talk to academics in psychology – was in Sweden - about certain things, but not about other things because then you are not in psychology anymore. In a funny way. I am sure you are probably familiar with that also. So I think that is a huge part of the explanation, but still there, I mean, it isn't the whole thing. It think this idea of a kind of corporatism that characterizes Swedish society. This thing that, we have labour unions, and then we have the government and state, and then we have the local house, there is a kind of peacefulness about it and we are sort of all in agreement and its all kind of nice. And these troublesome ideas they're, people don't want to stick out, they don't want to be bothersome and troublesome. I have very personal experience with that, once in the copier room, 10, no almost 15 years ago, the professor, the big professor, in that department, where I still am, was trying to, he wanted to hit on me! So angry, so angry. Because the female students in that year, had actually gone to the press and talked about how bad psychology was, for women. They were really outraged and, of course, I got the blame for that. Because they had broken this nice quiet façade by blurting it out in the newspaper, and you are not supposed to do that, it was really a breech of etiquette. And I think that is a very, very Swedish thing. We sort of negotiate between, among this, but very seldom, too seldom I think. I don't have a real answer to your question. But there may be a connection. But I'm not sure the connection is about this idea that we're already there, because it is so obvious we are not in psychology. I mean, we have 75-80% of our students are women and we have perhaps 18% of the full professors are women, and that is not even close to getting even. {38:50} So, but there is also, oh yes there is another thing. The psych departments in Sweden, you have an organization, a sort

of on top of that, which is an informal organization that is called an academy of psychology or something, that are very interested in keeping tabs on who gets jobs and sort of keep[ing] things scientific and I think that tends to keep certain things out. Like feminists. I still think it's kind of strange. Sweden should be better considering we are pretty good at political stuff and labour market stuff and parental needs stuff and yeah.

KS: So what do you think then, are some of the directions or some of the issues psychology needs to grapple with in the future to get to a better place?

EM: Are you talking about Sweden or the world?

KS: In Sweden, well either, but specifically Sweden.

EM: Well, I am working now on a very, very practical level. In my department – I've been in women's studies for ages and came back to my department last year. That also tells you something. Because I was in women's studies, not because that's the world's best place to be, but…yeah, sure. But anyways, when I got back to my department I said to the chair, I think we should do something about all those complaints that the students are constantly complaining about the lack of gender issues, and race/ethnic issues, sexuality issues, you name it, intersectionality. So I said I am prepared to do something if you want. So I am. I am at the moment, in our little local place, going through the curriculum, having seminars with teachers, having seminars with the higher people in the department and changing stuff. How far that will go, I don't know. But I think probably, the students really are so angry that not much has been happening and I know that students at other universities also are, because they contact me. I mean I've written stuff, I've written textbooks, so the students know that I exist. And I think what we should do, what the discipline should do is realize that a new time has come. Students nowadays aren't, I mean they are much more knowledgeable. They are much less prepared to accept this sort of narrow idea of what knowledge is and what psychologists should do, you know the whole idea of therapeutic stance and that kind of stuff, so I think we should get real and get out there. Not stay in the lab, not stay in the therapy room but get out and do things, because psychologists do that too little. And I think psychologist should be much more keen on debates, taking part in society. I mean psychologists in Sweden do that too little. I notice when newspapers and magazines call and want to do interviews they are often surprised, "Oh you think that's okay." Because, if they think of something to say, I should say it whenever. I have been in tabloids, I think that's fine, as long as you have good things to say. That wasn't an answer to your question, but I mean, I think psychologists should become less psychological. And start thinking about context in a serious way, and history. Oh yes. {43:04}

KS: Have you given any specific advice to the students who contact you? Or, what would you – if you could speak?

EM: Well I teach, of course, and I supervise and… no the specific advice, depends, of course. But I had an email the day before yesterday, from have a Swedish student in Stockholm who had read something I had written before, but who was so upset about one

of the teachers in the cognitive psychology class, who had been talking about "little monkey boys," "monkey girls" and how do they this and they do that, and that is exactly what human boys and girls do and all that stuff about spatial difference. So this woman went up to her [professor] after class and said, "You know there are other ways to look at this. Have you thought about… one could have more critical angles?" And got the answer, "You feminists have to get real. You have to realize that spatial differences they just do exist, so there!" So this poor student was "Ah! What am I going to do?" So there's some of that, of course. So advice to students well, don't put all your eggs in one basket, isn't an expression you have? Learn things outside the discipline, be promiscuous, yeah. Study gender, women's studies courses as much as you can, and try to integrate it into your professional training. And the other thing I tell them, when they leave, when they're finished, is don't be alone. Do kept contact with the ones you established some kind of network with. Especially if you have that kind of… I did actually start a kind of virtual network, one of those email lists, a listserv about 10 years ago that I was able to keep going while I was at the Nordic Institute for Women's Studies, a few years back and I am thinking of doing it again. That sort of petered out because I was too busy and I think people were less internet-aware in those days, so that wasn't [generating] a lot of activity. I am thinking of getting some such thing together, but I would like to have some young person who is more of a whiz, being efficient on that kind of thing. It would be doable in the Nordic countries, they are five countries who can more or less speak the same language, we can understand each other, basically. And in the old listserv there were about 45 or 50 people. So there are people and there's much more now.

AR – I have a question about your own methodological journey. So how has that evolved?

EM: Well I am a very, very well trained positivist. I have lots of course points in statistics, especially experimental design, analysis of variance, that kind of stuff. Because that's what you did. And I don't think I have a single academic point in any qualitative methods stuff, because that didn't exist in those days. But when I came back to the academy, after having done that long stint in the occupation health place, where I did lots of practical, on-site research and got more and more interested in what happened when you interviewed people. So for me, when I go back to the academy I wanted to start my own research, sort of more serious academic research, there was no other way I could do it then just talking to people. So I did a follow-up study for three and a half years or something with actually people I had been working with earlier, in a period when the government, the Swedish government were doing lots of change in their organizations, all kinds of local authorities and so on. I wanted to follow a number of women to see what would be their strategies when things start changing. A prospective study. And there was no one to ask, so I just started and then, of course, like so many other people I just kind of learned as I went along.

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Well, I managed to find people like [Liz] Stanley and [Sue] Wise, remember that book? *Breaking Out* from 1983 where they talk about feminist sociology. Judith Stacey doing feminist sociology, you know, bits and pieces here and there. Wendy Hollway, Chris Weedon, not exactly methods stuff but… and of course Margie Wetherell and Jonathan Potter, but especially Margie Wetherell. That book on racism in New Zealand for instance, that was very important to me. So it was very much reading what people had been doing ,trying it out. There was a little book from England, *Qualitative Research in Psychology* or something like from the beginning of the 90s with Peter Banister, Ian Parker, Erica Burman. And Ian had a chapter on discourse analysis that made me realize, you know maybe one could actually do these things. So I started, on one of my interviews, and there I was, this was fun, and then I sort of went on from there. And I guess that is how it often goes. So I think I learned doing methods before I seriously reading, because all those methods books came later, they came from say '96 and then there has been a deluge, hasn't there? And reading, trying, discussing, writing, thinking and Hanne Haavind has been a very important person for me. She was my first informal and then formal supervisor for this, when I finally did do a dissertation in 1998.

AR: And how was that received by your psychology colleagues?

EM: No ones told me anything to my face and I haven't even heard anything coming from back somewhere. But I do have a feeling that dissertation, it's been actually quite well read. They printed lots of copies and I know people read it. All the libraries have it, and everything, but I think its more sociologists, anthropologists, education people but not so much psychologists who read. They just don't get it.

AR: It is not their language?

EM: The whole book, it's thematic analysis half of it and then it is discourse analysis. They don't get it. So I had to get a sociologist as the opponent for my dissertation defence. Which was fine. But someone in psychology asked me "Aren't you worried that when you don't have a psychologist as your opponent that that will do something to the status of your dissertation?" And so I answered, "There's no problem. It can't be lower" (Laughs). I think students, doctoral students and so on, they find it and they read it. Yeah. In psychology, yeah.

KS: Well I am just looking at the time, I don't know if anyone has any questions or you have anything we haven't covered?

EM: But if you are short on time, you should cut when you need to cut.

KS: No, we are fine.

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EM: Obviously, I can talk for a long time.

AR: You had a number of other things, Kate. Well I wanted to talk to you a little bit more about some of your recent large-scale projects. One of the ones that catches my eye from your CV is the Nordic gender equality, between rhetoric and practice. If you can speak a bit about that project?

EM: Yeah, that's actually fun in many ways because it was a collaboration between me, a psychologist, and two political scientists. And we had an idea that, here we thought we have these countries with all this rhetoric, and so on. It would be fun to see if we could find some kind of system or some kind of pattern or something, trying to sort of in parallel study it in different very sort of traditionally different societal levels. So one of them did study parliament level. The other one, studied, well, the kind of implementation level, the region, the regional level, where there is sometimes been, like women's projects, like we want to do something for women in this geographical area so we start a resource center of some kind and you can apply for project money, you can do things. So she studied that. And I wanted to see what happens at home. But we had this umbrella idea of this gender equality discourses. But we also wanted to look at different countries, because the Nordic countries are often painted as if we're just one little piece of the world map, that is so similar, whereas we know that they aren't. Even their gender equality traditions or programs, legislations actually have different backgrounds, and rather different formations. Yeah, so we did that for three or four years and in so doing we also got together a network of Nordic researchers who were sort of edging on these issues, but from many different… So there were historians, philosophers, sociologists, a couple more psychologists and we actually got together a book last year, with works from almost all of us, which we called *Critical Studies of Gender Equality Discourses* or something like that, because we are all thinking that yes, there are lots of good things going on there, but there are also other things going on. That may mean as countries, as cultures, we may be fooling ourselves by telling ourselves stories that become very normative, and that do not paint a picture of the reality of all the citizens. So that's what all these people have been after. Ethnicity issues, when for instance, Sweden has a lot of immigrants from Kurdistan, for about 20, not a lot, but quite a few actually, over the past 20 years or so. So we have the clash between the honour-organized cultures and the Swedish very, very, very equality-oriented culture. And the discourses just don't work together, so it creates all sorts … that's one such thing people have studied. Whether we, the three of us, Anne Maria [Holli], Malin [Rönnblom], and myself, whether we really got to, I don't know, but we learned a lot and had a lot of fun, and I didn't know a much about political science before that, so I got to know a lot about political science. And we exchanged ideas, ways of thinking, ways of analyzing, which was really fun. As a psychologist also interviewing couples. You know it is easy to get bogged down down in individual psychology or social psychology on this little level and not as I have been really trying to do, keep moving backwards and forwards, that I think this political science umbrella has been very important to me. And I have kept it. So that was - and one of the fun things about it was that it was a Nordic project, so it covered several countries, so we could also compare in many different ways.

AR: And what did you find about gender equality practices and the rhetoric around gender equality, how did that map on to what couples were telling you about their home life? What were some of the findings there?

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EM: Well, in that part of the project we looked at Sweden, Denmark, and Finland. We chose, we couldn't do all five countries, that was just too much. We chose Sweden and Denmark because we thought that they would be quite extreme in terms of rhetoric. Sweden we are really the good big guys, Sweden is the big country in that cluster of five and we always like to feel that we are best and first, oh yes. I wish I could do that pictorially, the way that Sweden thinks they're really the good guys. Whereas Denmark is sort of a raucous, somewhat…anyways, so Denmark is more continental. They drink more, they smoke more, whereas we don't drink and smoke, of course we do. But it's that sort of that.

AR: Black sheep kind of?

EM: But, they think Swedes are boring, always toeing the line. And Finland did really get on this sort of progress, this upward thing that has always been such a big thing in the Nordic countries after the Second World War. Progression, they got onto that later, so they are sort of 10, 15 years behind in terms of when they've been doing things. So that for Finland was interesting to compare. So, Denmark they think they've done it, it's fixed, they don't have to think about these things anymore. In Sweden, you are supposed to think about it because the government says you to, and in Finland they're beginning to be supposed to think so. So that is one difference that you could really see in the interviews, though not explicit. It seemed really much more possible for the Danish couples to be much more disdainful about equality issues, "those old feminists" that kind of stuff and "my mothers generation they…". Whereas in Finland you find more couples who are talking about, "when my husband changes diapers, my in-laws are so odd. It is so new." So they felt like pioneers and the Swedes, you just did it because that's what you are supposed to do. So there really were discursive differences, oh yes. But of course even in Sweden there are people who were the opposite. They, of course, then had serious rhetorical work to do in terms of justifying their ways of doing things. Not sharing, the husband taking no paternal leave, and so on. So that created a lot of rhetorical work that I got really fascinated by, that is so interesting. So there were differences, but they weren't easy to [motions narrowing in on]. But yes, absolutely, there were connections, there are, that is something that will be fun to go further. I had a student interview working class fathers in the North of Sweden last fall, and they didn't find much of this ideal falling apart, actually. They can't be bothered by such stuff.

AR: So socioeconomic status is going to be one of the things that...

EM: It is. Less now than 20 years ago, but it is still there.

AR: Anything else you would like to add that we haven't asked?

EM: Well I really think psychology in Sweden really does need injections, as psychology. As psychology, not necessarily feminist.

{DVD ends 1:02:14}

Second DVD

AR: Do either of you have anything, thinking about wrapping up here, that you would like to ask? Okay, well let me ask a little bit, with an eye on wrapping up. You mentioned to me on the elevator you are working on this book. Can you describe what the goal of this book is, the objective, the theme?

EM: When American textbooks enter Sweden, they don't quite fit. There's quite substantial cultural differences and I am not sure they are getting smaller actually, in spite of the internet. We are grappling with different issues, political and cultural, all that kind of thing. So it is not easy to teach from U.S. textbooks. So, a few years back I wrote a Swedish textbook for a very introductory level. That's being used. But this is an idea of going further, writing a textbook that's based in critical, feminist psychology. Really, based in that, in socio-cultural basis. So that's what we are doing and we're doing it for Sweden, so it's going to be written in Swedish. So Jeanne Marecek and I are writing in English. It is a slow process, it is. Because both of us have a long of history of thinking about these issues, from very different places in terms of professional stuff, which is fine. She is more into therapy and that kind of stuff and I am more into families and work life, so we sort of pool our knowledge. I am hoping it will be sort of slightly higher academic level than this first one that is already there, being used.

KS: What are some of the issues, teaching from an American textbook?

EM: Well one of the things actually is the American textbooks are about women. That wouldn't work in Sweden. They have to be about gender. And nowadays they couldn't just be about just white gendered people either, I mean they can't be here either. And, they can't just be about heterosexual white people either. So I mean there's something in the take in American books that is too empirical. It sort of takes it from the cradle to the grave and you go on. Whereas I think for our cause, we would like more of theoretical approach. This is how we look at it, let's take this angle into these things, and then what we see? In a sense more analytical and in a sense perhaps more oriented to actually doing your own research eventually, not just learning fact about - I mean feminist facts fine, but it is a different kind of approach. It is a totally, totally, non-positivist approach in terms of actually bringing out theoretical stances out in the clear.

{3:17}

KS: Sounds good.

EM: Yeah, we will see. I have just been writing a chapter on sex differences, I didn't think we would do that but we have to.

AR: So what is your take going to be? How are you going to present it without opting into the sex difference rhetoric?

EM: Well that is just it, reframing it. We don't have to talk about that here, you will see it eventually. But it's about framing it critically. It is an issue that cannot be avoided today, I thought if you write a textbook or a book for feminist critical psychology you shouldn't have to do that stuff, but so much has happened that has made us realize, no it needs to be there, but taken, packaged within this framework so that you…And also, you get arguments, we end the chapter with by six arguments, six types of arguments which will be quite useful.

AR: I think Kate has already kind of asked you this, but I will leave this as my final question: right now would you have any advice or words of wisdom for women or men who are trying to be Feminist psychologists either in Sweden, or anywhere else for that matter?

EM: Yeah, I had lots of benefit from being knowledgeable about the way organizations work, since I worked professionally. I also worked as a consultant, a little bit. Yes, if you want to practice something that deviates from the norm, learn the organization. I mean *really* and be very, very cynical about it. Yeah, and that's… I think that is really important, because often if things go wrong or you don't feel you don't get across with your things, it isn't your fault. There are so many other powers, forces, discourses and by organization I don't mean just the levels and so on, but what is really going there. What is made possible to do, to know, to think and so on. I had a student who did her thesis years ago where she interviewed feminists who were psychotherapists. You can't be a feminist psychotherapist in Sweden. There isn't such a denomination, it doesn't exist as such. But there are people who work as therapists and who are feminist. So she interviewed them about how they organize their working lives and what were their stumbling blocks and so on. And that was quite interesting. One of the most important things that she found was this organizational thing, how to navigate, how to find spaces, so really knowing the clinic, the hospital, whatever, what is possible to do.

{06:30}

And, of course, the next thing is networking, which we talked about. You shouldn't be alone. And then, of course, learning, thinking, being critical. And I of course, I believe more in critical feminist psychology than in womanist psychology, because I think, and by "womanist" I mean stuff like the followers of Carol Gilligan and Jean Baker Miller, we have similar things in our country too. I think you so inevitably, eventually become co-opted back into some sort of difference thinking and I think that is lethal. I mean I don't, not really becoming foundational here, I don't care if there are sex differences or not. That's not the important thing. I care about inequality and about life circumstances

and, sort of justice, even. But that women and men are different from each other, so what? I am constantly so fascinated by the fact that you can earn money and get so many positions by looking at a one percent difference in this or that thing. I mean how often does that matter? Yeah, you know this just fascinates me. I think this is a question, it is a matter of rhetoric. It must serve some other purpose than just knowing the truth. So that is why I get so angry at the woman who, my colleague, who told off this poor student, who wanted... We encourage students. I am sure you have been encouraged to think critically, that is what universities say they do all the time. But when you do that – eckk! [motions smashing, laughs] She was trying to do that and she gets chopped off at her knees. That makes me really angry. So more anger, it is all right to be angry and fight and less towing the line. And wider psychology that is contextualized and you know seriously indigenous. Sweden has indigenous psychology, so does the U.S., so does South Africa, but several indigenous psychologies I am sure, to be really aware of that. So I would say, if you ask me within psychology, where my home is, it's probably discursive psychology and socio-cultural psychology. That's where I would place myself. Very, very close to anthropology.

AR: Anybody else?

AK: I think, I have always been, always curious about how feminists, or how academics in general, deal with questions of ethnicity in Europe. Are only feminist psychologists or feminist academics, the only ones to be dealing with issues of ethnicity or is it something that is more talked about than issues of gender, for example?

EM: I would say in the E.U., more and more ethnicity issues are on the agenda, a lot. And in Sweden, if you look over the last 10 years they have really, really come on to the agenda in a big way. But I think that feminists have been among the ones who have really brought on the agenda in a serious way. And one of the important issues has been honour-related killings, that kind of stuff, because Sweden was so European, so northern European, so white for so long. We had a few Turks down in Stockholm, sort of, out there in some suburb. That was about it. And then in the 70s things started changing and they changed very quickly. But it isn't, I wouldn't say that until the last 10 years that things have reached the academy in a serious way and several of the people who have brought these issues up and really made them heard have been immigrant feminists. Yeah. Sociologists, actually social geographers, some anthropologists, not psychologists, but some pretty close to. From South America, many of them. There was a large immigration when Pinochet was in Chile. I think several came then. So today we have a growing field of ethnicity studies but it has not been there for a long time, no. There used to be some anthropologists, but, you know, they often went away somewhere and then came back and wrote then. So they have been sort of, we have had the "immigrant problem" we can sort of see, but that's another thing. I think, I think that is something very different from taking ethnicity seriously. For instance, we have an indigenous people in Sweden, the **Samis** whom we had treated immensely awfully bad, bad for many, many years. It's better now, but we moved them about just as the Americans have been doing with the Indians, sure. So we have that kind of conscience to think about. Yeah. But in feminist studies today in Sweden, in gender studies, women's studies,

whatever you call it, ethnicity is really on the agenda, they are back-to-back. And it is a big change in 10 years, a really big change, I think. And, it is taken very seriously.

{13:03}