Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Dr. Floretta Boonzaier

Interviewed by Amanda Nkeramihigo
Interview conducted remotely using Zoom platform
May 26th, 2025

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AN: Amanda Nkeramihigo, Interviewer
FB: Floretta Boonzaier, Interview Participant

AN: Today is May 26 and I'm having this interview with Dr. Boonzaier. Am I saying this right?

FB: Yes.

AN: Excellent. OK. And for the record actually, could you please state your full name and date of birth for our record?

FB: And so yeah, Floretta Boonzaier. Date of birth, I was born on the 27th of March, 1974.

AN: Excellent. And where were you born and where do you currently live reside, work?

FB: Yes, I was born in Cape Town and I still live in Cape Town and lived for the most part in Cape Town, South Africa. I work in the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape Town. And last year was, this year actually, going into my 21st year as an Academic at the University.

AN: Congratulation!

FB: Thank you.

AN: That's brilliant. Excellent. So, could you tell me a little bit about how you first began to relate to feminism or womanism or other forms of gender and intersectional ideas and thoughts?

FB: Hmm. I got promoted to full professor in 2019. But then, of course, they was Covid and all sorts of other things, so I only did my inaugural lecture last year. And it's great that this interview comes after that, because in the inaugural lecture I did some kind, some reflection on my career and like the very question that you're asking about feminism. In fact, I'll send you a link to the inaugural lecture, I should have done that when I said my CV, because it might be of interest, I'll to not be able to talk about everything I covered there. But it was a kind of reflector, you know, reflection on my career. And in the inaugural lecture, I said that I learned feminism, the practice of feminism, intersectional feminism, long before I learned academic feminism, and that was really, on the basis of the experience of growing up in a Black community in Cape Town during apartheid. I mean, I started by saying I learn my feminism from my mom, you know, like strong, strong women like my mom, who kind of held it all together in the face of state **[02:52]**

and other forms of violence that they were witnessing in their communities. You know, just the women in my family, the women in our communities, that have been struggling with exclusion, discrimination, violence, multiple forms of violence: state violence, violence in the community, violence in their homes. But we just managed to hold it all together, you know, take care of their children, take care of other people's children. Ensure that their families were fed. And then of course women also were involved in resisting apartheid, you know, despite everything going on in their homes, families. The kind of resistances that were also evident and the care that they displayed, you know, for everyone and their communities. And so yeah, that's when, I think, yeah, I learned... that's where I ground my feminism in. And of course it was always intersectional, you know. Intersectionality wasn't something that I… it's something in an academic way I learned about, when I learned about feminism at university, when I started studying psychology and was introduced to a feminist psychology, but also introduced to other disciplines like gender study, where have started to learn about academic feminism. But for me, it's always been intersectional because of my own experiences of racialized and class-based exclusion. And so, there was no other way to think about feminism, you know. In fact, I guess if you wanna call it "white Feminism" is the thing that was like, oh, OK, that kind of, you know, that was the "other" in a sense!

AN: Interesting.

FB: Yeah.

AN: OK, so maybe I'll jump into that. When you learned this, essentially the academic feminism as opposed to the lived, just actually "in the air" kind of feminism, that you learn from your mother and the women in your communities, etc., how did you receive that? Did you find it that it was? Yeah, actually, I'm just gonna let you speak to what did that feel like? Did that feel connected, or did that just give you another perspective?

FB: It sounds like a homecoming of sorts, right? It sounds like, I could actually find my place in academia, and in this discipline of psychology. So, it felt like…I kind of naturally… it felt like a natural inclination towards that kind of work, you know? So, when I was learning about it was like, just like I wanted to know more and more. And it also allowed me to find my place and my space within the discipline, as I continued on with studying psychology. Because then, I think for me, my introduction to psychology - and I know it's a question that you ask about in terms of what attracted me to psychology, but what I was grateful for, that my introduction to psychology didn't feel like, mainstream, you know? That my very introduction to this discipline was a kind of social critical feminist psychology, and the people I was….So, my undergraduate degree was done at a historically Black institution in Cape Town. And so, a lot of the psychologists who have now become my colleagues in the discipline, a lot of them were, you know, involved in the anti-apartheid movement and were pushing back against the whiteness of psychology as a discipline itself, you know, and teaching feminist psychology. And so, these are the people who introduced me to psychology, and that was exciting, you know, to be introduced to psychology by people who were activists and doing this really important work. And so, it didn't feel like a

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discipline that I felt outside of. It felt like something that I could, and I wanted to progress and do more in.

AN: And what did attract you to psychology?

FB: Yeah, you know I came into psychology wanting to be a clinician, like, I guess everyone, you know, every student at first, like everyone wants to be that kind of psychologist. I'm not *that kind* of psychologist. So, I did come in wanting to be a clinician, and I think it was related to just the experiences, just all the trauma I saw around me and experienced, you know, in my family, just like the trauma of apartheid. The trauma of growing up in a society that was highly unequal in terms of race and class. Or that class distinctions were racialized. And just the trauma of all of that, you know, in my own family. My dad still has this story that's still very present of when they were forcibly removed, when the area that they had been living in now was declared a White area, and you know, Black families were moved out. And so, to have these traumatic stories present, but then also witnessing what you witness in your community, like just all that trauma, I think is what drew me to an interest in in people and in psychology. Yes.

AN: And you said you went into it for clinical psychology, but you're not *that kind* of psychologist. What kind of Psychologist, would you call yourself?

FN: Oh. I veer between calling myself in well, you know, there's the feminist psychologist… It's interesting because these things change [laughs]. At one time I was a post-structural psychologist, although I didn't call myself that, but someone else did, you know? I mean, I guess, depending on how specific I want to be, I call myself a research psychologist, academic psychologist. And I think that I realized as I was grappling with the feminist work – I'm going to use the term *feminist* broadly to encompass the critical and social psychology work that we were doing as I was grappling with that, and also learning, you know, more about it, I realized that that's what I wanted to do. I wanted to do the [inaudible] **[10:44]** in the discipline and that I didn't…because I felt like doing the clinical route would take me away from that. But you know, at some point, before pursuing any further postgraduate study, I made the choice to build a more academic route.

AN: OK.

FB: Driven by my interests, yeah.

AN: So if we go back a little bit about in the question of your feminist roots and what you have told me about how that started for you, how have you – you've kind of touched on it, but could you maybe speak a little bit more about how you've merged these values, these feminist values with your work as a psychologist and how that has informed perhaps your direction into becoming a researcher Psychologist. And, how that influences your research and teaching.

FB: Hmm. Yeah, it does. As much as I… There's a happy story to tell about how I found my place, since I call – I guess it's a retrospective story, right? Like how I found my place in this discipline, where there was something very early on that excited me about it. There's also the

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underside of that, which relates to then moving from this historically Black institution to pursue further study in this discipline that excites you at the institution that was historically white, right, and you know exclusively White during apartheid, and then, still sitting with the history of that, right, reflected in – at the time I joined the institution – reflected very profoundly in the staff complement, especially like at the associate professor and professorial level, mostly White and men. But at the time also reflected in the class I joined, you know, I was one of just like a very small, not even a handful of Black students. And feeling so alienated, feeling so excluded. And fell out of place. And I think that experience, right, coupled with my own, you know, earlier history, childhood experiences, has definitely shaped the work that I've done and continue to do in terms of…I mean in just multiple ways, but one way is just thinking about how questions of social justice are up front and centre right. Questions of alienation, inclusion, of belonging, you know, that come into the work in different ways. So yeah, that experience was really foundational in a sense of…because I always think about – I'm not sure if it's mentioned anywhere what you've encountered, but in 2018, a college and I created a space in the Department of Psychology called the Hub for Decolonial Feminist Psychologies in Africa. And when we talk about the creation of the hub, when I think about the creation of the hub, I think about it as a place I would have wanted when I joined the Psychology department as a student, as a black student who felt so alienated and so out of place. And so, and that's the crux of it, that's what we've been working on. And so, then I often think about the students who come into the space and we're able to make it their home and to feel a sense of belonging and how we do that for each other collaboratively, you know. So, I think, yeah, that's probably…. There are multiple layers to it, I think, but that that's one of the key things I think that, in terms of hardship. So, to be able to create this space inside an institution that has been struggling for decades to transform. And to think of questions of transformation not just fundamentally in terms of race, but not only race. So, we think about, you know, marginalization in terms of class and gender identity, sexuality, you know, in an expensive way. So, in that space, but then also to be able to create that space of belonging inside a discipline, that in its mainstream form still operates to exclude particular kinds of voices.

AN: Brilliant. And yes, I definitely did look into the Hub for Decolonial Psychologies, in South Africa. I'd be curious as to how it started, and I think it makes sense, why. But how did you start this? And, I understand you started this with Dr. Kessi, I don't know if there were other people involved. But yeah, so tell me a little bit about the story of the Hub.

F: Yeah. Shose and I… I have been in the department for some time, and she also joined, and, you know, we kind of collaborated on different things. One of the stories, I think, to tell about the formation of the Hub is also about… Shose, I think, joined the Department of Psychology at the time when discourses around transformation, you know, they hit every now and then, right? Immediately after the end of apartheid, of course, all institutions in South Africa, you know, the series of conversations that come up every now and then. And this is a renewed time for discourses around transformation at the institution. As colleagues and friends, we were also having these conversations between ourselves around transformation, and we were becoming increasingly frustrated with the institutional discourse on transformation because it pitched discourses of transformation against the idea of academic excellence. **[18:20]**

So, it's like if we want to transform as an as an institution, have more black students and staff, it's like something has to suffer in terms of academic and, you know, we were reading that in the way that the university was communicating about transformation. And every time we would see something we'd check and become frustrated. And then of course, there was also my history at the Institute. Working as an employment equity representative, working in the Transformation Committee in our faculty, and then, you know, getting excited with opportunities for transformation come up, but then seeing black staff leave, you know. Come, join departments, get excited, and leave over the years. That's something I was noticing there as well, alongside this frustration with the institutional discourse. Basically, we formed a Black Academic Caucus at the time, and it started out where we wrote a response to the Vice Chancellors' discourse around transformation and academic excellence. We wrote an open, public kind of response, and we were 19 people who signed that letter. And, as I said, that emerged like from conversations that Shose and I were having around transformation and the struggle, was the way the institution was positioning this discourse. And the group of 19 then became the Black Academic Caucus, which then existed to basically challenge issues of transformation at the university, and have done multiple things over the years and still exists. So, there was that. And then there was, of course, our department, because the Black Academic Caucus was a university-wide organization. And then, I can't remember the year, the year of 2017/2018? There was this call…I'm not sure how familiar you are with Rhodes Must Fall? The student movement? In 2015, 2016, there was a student movement at the University of Cape Town that really was about, fundamentally, issues of transformation and decolonization of the institution. Centred on… there was a statue of Cecil John Rhodes, colonialist who, you know, held front and centre space at the university, and it was around removal of the statue, but it was about more than removal. And many of us as staff were also involved in supporting students who were protesting, because they were raced and there was a lot going on at the time. So, after the Rhodes Must Fall movement, which, I mean had global reach – in fact, this year marked the 10th anniversary of the Rhodes Must Fall – there were other similar movements acknowledging the history of slavery. I remember being at Harvard in 2015, and there was some kind of… there was Oxford, a similar movement at Oxford, you know. And then of course discourses around decolonization reared again. And so, in response to that, the university put out a call for decolonization grants, Research Grants, and Shose and I came together, had this conversation. She had been doing research on race, institutional racism; I'd been doing research on gender and sexual violence. And we yeah, I mean the conversations we were having, the kind of collaboration we were doing, the space of the Hub emerged as part of that conversation. The idea of the formation of the hub. So, we applied for this grant, and we were successful and the rest is history. But just fundamentally to say that it was a space that, it *is* a space that we thought about as challenging… as doing the kind of research that we were both involved in: stuff around intersectional identities and oppression, institutional violences, structural racism, you know, talking about the kind of history of apartheid and colonization and its place today in different forms, and a whole range of intersecting topics. But fundamentally, it was thought about as this space of a student-driven space, that students themselves would come in and take ownership of… that we would be able to work with students as not just students, but that all of us would be collaborating on building this space. Sorry. It's a long answer to your question. **[23:54]**

AN: No, it's great. It's great. I do also want to note, it is not just a hub for decolonial psychologies in South Africa, but that the word *feminist* is there as well. Whether it just came naturally or if this was something intentional to ensure that this is continuously embedded basically in the work that's being done there.

FB: Yes. It was definitely intentional. I mean, I was thinking about it before this interview. I thought if you were to ask me what the Hub is, I would say *it's a feminist space we created in the Department of Psychology*. So, for me, the feminist... the idea of it being a *feminist decolonial* space is central. It's really important. And it's kind of manifested in the ways that we think about the kind of work we do, about who we are, our identity, if you want, and the kind of work that we do. The kind of care and support that we offer ourselves and each other. So, the feminist space, the idea of it being a feminist space was absolutely, really important.

AN: Excellent. Maybe I'll ask one more question about the Hub: How has the work that's being done in the Hub and how the Hub has been put together and evolved, how has that been received within the school, but also perhaps within South Africa and beyond, if that's the case, and what kind of dialogues, and I'm sure there are many, but what kind of dialogues can you think of and perhaps even tensions have emerged from that?

FB: I think the idea of the Hub has been welcomed. Of course, you know, I think psychology departments operate like this the world over. As much as in academia, we work in our silos, but even in psychology departments, we work in our silos. You know, we've got a neuropsychologist stream, we do the critical feminist work. So, I think in the university space it's been welcome because we we've done, especially at the beginning, we've done a lot of transdisciplinary conversations around issues, to think about decolonial feminist work, not just from the space of psychology as a discipline, but what that, you know, what we can kind of like learn from other disciplines. And conversations about issues like spatial justice, for instance. You can't only have a conversation about social justice from a psychological perspective. The other people who would enrich that kind of conversation, the same about conversations of intergenerational trauma, for example.

AN: Hm.

FB: So, there is that recognition very early on that, that those are the kinds of conversations that we need to have. It has to be transdisciplinary. So, I think from that perspective it's been welcomed, the formation of the hub. And there's definitely been a lot of interest, nationally but also internationally, of people wanting to join, collaborate. We've had speakers from many different parts of the world. Yeah, I think we opened up a necessary space at a necessary time. And so, the response has been really, hmm, rewarding, and we continue kind of like…we're not currently funded and hopefully some funding will come through soon, but despite the lack of funding, we've been able to, you know… I think that when both of us talk about the Hub now, Shose and myself, we talk about it as the space, and that's exceeded the expectations we had when we thought about starting this thing. The reputation it's gained internationally, we couldn't have imagined that when we thought "oh, it's a collaborative little research space".

[28:44]

There's also something about the physical space, taking ownership, that I think we learned a lot from. You asked who else was involved: at the time I had a postgraduate student, who's now a colleague in my department, who helped us, who worked with us on the formation, you know, once we got the funding. His name is Haile Matutu and Haile helped us create this really beautiful space, you know, on the ground floor of the psychology department, with plants and art and comfortable seating, and it's a space we also teach in, and everyone who walks into the room is like… I mean, you know, psychology departments are like hospitals, cold and feeling like isolated, you know! But they walk into the room, and they feel a sense of warmth and that was important for us too, you know. So, there's that belong, but it's not just, there's something about the physicality of the space that's also important.

AN: Thank you. It's beautiful. OK, so let's talk a little bit about decoloniality, and perhaps go into a bit of questions about method, and then I'll go back to the original protocol. So, the next thing that I'm going to ask you is, what does decolonial feminist psychology mean to you, specifically, could you give us a definition? I know that's wide!

FB: [Laughs]

AN: [laughs] But what comes up for you when you think about decolonial feminist psychology? I also note that in your work, or at least in one of the papers that I read, that you used the term *intersectional decolonial feminism*, which you discussed today as well. What would be a definition of decolonial feminist psychology and/or intersectional decolonial feminist psychology?

FB: Hmm. Why am I not surprised that the psychologist is asking for a definition [laughs]. Like I want to do a tongue-and-cheek thing and say, "well it defies definition", you know. I can say multiple things, I'm not going to give you a definition, I think you know, I think you know people that people have tried to define it in different ways. I think there are a few key things, for me about decolonial feminist Psychology, right? One of the key things is intersectionality, right? I feel like the idea of intersectionality is embedded in decolonial feminism. The other key thing is history. History is really important. So, it's a recognition of the ways in which colonization and, you know, slavery and apartheid and all that, being foundational to the creation of particular kinds of identification. As related to race, related to gender, sexuality. So, it's not only thinking about that history, right, but thinking about how that history resurfaces in the present. And so, for me in my own work on gender and sexual violence, my decolonial feminism wasn't something that I felt like, "*Oh, there's this nice theory let me use it to try and understand my work on gender violence"*. And I still think about decolonial feminism in this way: I think about it as an emerging kind of, evolving praxis, if you want. And so, I came to the idea of decolonial feminist work through my engagement, a long history of working on gendered and sexual violence, and asking particular kind of critical question about identities, about racialized identities, about gendered identities, class identities, and how they were manifesting in our work with victims of intimate partner violence, with perpetrators of violence, and around public consciousness… About why violence happens, who is violent, who's considered violent, who's considered to be an ideal victim or not, and how those things are racialized and classed. **[33:48]**

AN: Right.

FB: And so, that kind of thinking and critical interrogation of the work on violence brought me to thinking about the importance, thinking about decolonial feminism. Because it made me see that something was going on. There seemed to be a resurfacing of kind of colonial ideas about black women, for instance, right? So, at first, it involved some kind of interrogation for me of like, how is it that not only media discourse, which you could argue you know, we expect the uncritical lens there, but not only in media discourse, even in the ways that scholars write about gender-based violence in South Africa, and in government too, that's another story, but how is it that it becomes racialized? And it becomes classed? That the violence is considered to be something to do with black people and black poor people in particular. So, there was something going on there that needed interrogation. And then of course, then you look at media discourse on femicide and how black women who died are represented in their death, in media discourse. There's something very stark that resonates with colonial ideas of black women and their bodies, and hyper visibility of their body, and a lack of subjectivity, a lack of humanity, a lack of dignity, all of that. So, for me, yeah, that is what decolonial feminism is, it's about an interrogation of how this history resonates with the present. Even, you know, in new forms, in different forms, but there's a there's a definite link that we can draw with the way that black femininity, and black masculinity, is represented in the contemporary moments with that long, long history.

AN: Right, of course. Thank you for that. And I want to then ask perhaps about… Well, first acknowledging my understanding that really decolonial feminists. Psychology came to you not as a framework first, but as it emerged out of your own work , and in my head, I'm thinking about how that, perhaps, makes research different, because then it is no longer something you search out and a tool that you use, it is just embedded in everything… that's my understanding of how you're speaking to that and I find that very interesting.

FB: Yes. Yes. And I think that it's emergent and I think that was my, you know, that's always my hesitation with thinking about the definition of it, you know because I feel like…I think the importance for me of a decolonial feminist framework is the possibilities that it opens up, that it allows. And so, then, thinking about research practice, I mean, that's for me where the decolonial feminist lens and opportunities have been most generative. Is to think about like, what does this mean for research practice. And when I teach about it, I talk about it as evolving, you know. But I think the lens allows us to think about questions like, so... I'm gonna give you one example about research practice that I think we, you know, taking the decolonial feminist psychological approach, and what it allowed us to. So, in the hub, I had a project funded in the Hub called the unsettling knowledge production project on gendered and sexual violence. And so that involved… The big question: Why, after so much research, so much activism, all of the work being done, why do we still see so much violence against women? Gender based violence, in South Africa in particular. And the project tried to also tie research with activism to say like: There's a recognition that our activist and our knowledge production activities are tied together, but fundamentally I'm an academic, I'm based in an academic institution, right? I don't work for a civil society organization, you know, my primary identity is not activist, if you want to call it

[39:10]

primary, but it doesn't mean there's nothing I can do. So, when we're doing scholarship, how do we foreground that social justice aspect of the work? And those are some of the key questions that we asked in that project. And so, this involved us, you know, me and a team of postgraduate students, postdoc, working together, you know, them doing the different research projects related to the broader questions of gender-based violence. And, at some point in the project, we opened up a conversation, and we did this at a retreat: We went away as a group of 10-12 people, we went away for 2-3 days, two nights kind of thing, and we had a key brief, right: The brief was, *what does it mean to do research on violence and trauma*? The second thing was *what does it mean for us*? Identified as we are in the different ways that we might be in our group, what does it mean for *us* to do the work on violence and trauma. And *what does it mean to be doing work on violence and trauma, on the very violences that we ourselves might be or have been experiencing?* So those are the key guiding questions. And then, we had an arts-based kind of retreat where we brought clay for pottery, Lego, painting, people could bring along the art forms that resonated with them. We had a drumming session, we had a memory work session with a clinical psychologist, we interviewed each other, we took photos. You know, it was a kind of just like emerging process for us around this question. Like, *what does it mean for us to do this work*? And we, yeah, we wrote together, we analyzed together, you know, we wrote a chapter, we wrote a paper together. I'm providing that as an illustration of what for us the decolonial feminist framework allows. It allows…and I think I want to put questions of reflexivity also there front and centre. It started out as a kind of like reflexive a project, but it was a lot more than that, you know. But it allows us to ask those kinds of questions and do that kind of work and produce knowledge in a way that counters traditional forms of knowledge production. And so, I think it has huge implications for method, I mean just one of which, yeah, I mentioned.

AN: And I'm going to go to a question about method in a moment. Before that perhaps to stay a little bit with this discussion you reminded me made me in this discussion about so one of my one of my peers' colleagues, one of my one of my friends is her work is on the concept of trauma. She works in gender. She works at a centre, and she's been working at a centre for gender-based violence for some time. She's in the same program as me and she's doing this research about trauma and reading her work and hearing, you talk now wonder as well, because trauma itself constructs people, it constructs a certain kind of subjectivity about how your experience is seen if it's seen through the lens of trauma, and I wonder what your understanding or experience or how trauma comes up as a term or as a defining framework perhaps in your work and especially in terms of…you talked about how black women are constructed, essentially, black women who are victims of gender birth violence. And whether that comes up, this lens of trauma and if it looks different for different people, like those… That kind of framing how trauma comes in, it's I find it also perhaps I'm curious I guess, especially because of the heavy history that is also present in South Africa and so trauma is connected to that. So, all of these things coming together in this intersectionality and. How do you think about trauma, from a decolonial feminist lens, essentially?

FB: OK. I guess that's not something that I'm going to put a definite pin in, because it's not

[44:17]

something that I've given enough thought to, you know, that is the framing of trauma from a decolonial feminism. Although, you know, we've definitely had conversations about trauma. And the different manifestations of trauma. I think one thing we do recognize that's key, I think, to your question about trauma, is … I think this is really, in large part the decolonial feminist learning talks about these different conceptions of Global North versus Global South, or other terms we use, you know, majority-minority, whatever. Because of course there's a Euro American-ness of psychology, right? So, the how the idea of trauma as this one sort of thing, through categorizations, such as PTSD, for example, is not quite applicable in a context where you are talking about forms of historical trauma, *ongoing* forms of trauma, right. And so, there is a recognition of at this juncture between what our discipline says a trauma framework is or looks like versus what we understand about the ways in which trauma manifest…what we are beginning to understand. So, a colleague in our department has written about a framework called C*ontinuous Traumatic Stress* as some kind of way of countering this idea of trauma is a one-source event. And the Continuous Traumatic Stress is talking about…exactly what I spoke about when I spoke about the history of where I grew, how I grew up, the recognition that, you know, people were experiencing violence in their homes, state violence that was racialized, violence in communities, interpersonal forms of violence in their communities on a continuous basis. So, if you think about people who live in low-income communities now across the country, across the world, maybe, with high rates of violence, gang violence, you know, violent crime. It's the continuity of that kind of thing. So yeah, I think that would be my preliminary thoughts on trauma as a framework.

AN: Excellent. I have a question about method. So, in your recent in when in recent chapters papers called Thinking Ethically About Quality in Qualitative Feminist: Decolonial and Intersectional Research (2025), you argue that good – and you discuss this as well here with me today– that like good decolonial Intersectional feminist work is contextualized, serves the most oppressed, is reflexive and complex, and also unsettles hegemonic Eurocentric knowledge systems. And I was wondering if you would tell me about – your touched on it a little bit – if you can tell me about how these commitments shape your methodological choices, in practice, and so, for example, how do you approach questions of method and ethics when designing research and conducting one within kind of this decolonial feminist framework?

FB: Hmm. The one thing about talking about ethics in particular, the one thing that I've come to realize quite deeply, over the years and then, to find ways of making that explicit through the detail on the framework, decolonial feminist framework as being this junction between. Institutional ethics, right. Ethics as a kind of like regulatory exercise, tick-box exercise, versus a take along your feminist framing of ethics, which is like, ongoing, which is reflexive, which is expansive. So, for example, to think about… and this is, yeah, this is something that I thought about quite deeply and it is kind of like embedded in our work across the years, in different ways, but to think about the kind of work we do… the kind of work we do *as knowledge producers*, and what that work does out there in the world, once it gets out there in the world. Right. So, to think about symbolic forms of violence that might be embedded in academic

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research. And so, if you're working in a department or in a discipline where it's quite commonplace to ask questions about, you know, in more positivist-oriented research, ask questions about...I mean, I'm obviously being brash in how I'm stating this, but "do low income people, who live in low income communities, have lower levels of empathy," you know? Like even for me, and that's not just the research that goes out there, you know, but, and this is how I've taught about it, in the research methods courses I've taught. But I've thought like, even the questions we ask have ethical implications. It's ethical, moral, political, right? Like, how do you ask questions? About empathy and class like what? Like what are you, you know? And I guess that comes from my own survey of the work on violence and looking at collectively what that's done, right? And then of course, like experiments, and this is my feminist psychology colleague at the University of the Western Cape, you know, she kind of taught me the framing of, like, we ourselves have been complicit in reproducing some of the very discourses that we now challenge and to acknowledge that. So, that we thought for that we were, you know, we were pointing to the injustice of a racialized system like apartheid and talking about how, you know, the reason we have so much violence in South Africa today is because of apartheid, right? But not realizing that when we talk about gender-based violence, for example, in that way, that we are racializing the violence and making a case that the violence is only situated in poor black communities. But then we're also silencing, you know, structural violence and other types of violence, that we don't necessarily talk about. So, I think the question of ethics from a decolonial feminist perspective is huge, right? It places a huge burden on us to think about, like the kinds of work that we do and as we often talk about, how do we see the humanity in the research? In the people that we work with in research, but also how do we bring in – and that's what that other project was about – our own humanity as researchers. What do we need to be doing this work with my own history and experience. So yeah, yeah, I don't know if that answers your question.

AN: It's great. No, that's it. I appreciate that very much. The only other piece will be: There seems to be… a thing that I come across when it comes to feminist work but also decolonial work in terms of the kind of methods that are used such as, and I think you've used these as well or discussed them, such as photo voice, narrative and participate action research. And if you think these are…if there, if there are certain types of methods that you have found are conducive to this kind of work and how you assess their quality perhaps, in terms of, you know, the kind of this, this framework and the ethics behind the work that you do.

FB: I would say that there's nothing inherent about those particular methods that open up the possibility of feminist decolonial work. I think that it's about…and we have argued, I've written with colleagues and others about the potential of approaches like Photovoice and participatory other kinds of participatory action research for doing decolonial feminist work. So, I think all of these approaches have the potential that we could utilize and expand, you know, to think about how that might advance decolonial feminist work, but I don't think there's anything inherent about it. So, I think even in your standard qualitative interview, right, there's something about how that process is managed that we can interrogate a bit more deeply in terms of like what the interview encounter is do for both the person being interviewed and the person doing the

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interview. I don't know if I've written about this, but I've definitely spoken about it. I feel like, the possibilities for the creation, if you will, of new methodological approaches, decolonial feminist possibilities, you know, but they're also huge possibilities to push forward the ways that we think about a standard qualitative interview. So, the thing that I said, I'm not sure if I wrote about it or I have just spoken about it… I think that when we talk about… and it was Margareta Hydén who had done narrative work, who introduced me to Narrative work, who had written about opening up discursive space in an interview. And then she wasn't talking about detail on your feminist work. She was talking about narrative work, which is her field. But there was something about that idea that really resonated with me. And so. to kind of, I'd like to push it forward a little bit and say, like there's something about, how do we create discursive space in our work? Both inside the interview and outside of it, in terms of thinking about how we make meaning of what happened in the interview. So, I think the methodological possibilities are vast. You know, there's a lot that we can write about, think about, and also do differently. And I think what's really been great for me in terms of this evolving emerging practice is because I'm thinking about it writing about it, teaching about it, then I'm also supervising students who are coming with questions about their own research practice that is allowing me to think about it differently. And, you know. Yeah. So that's it's been great to have all of those things come together.

AN: Excellent. Thank you. And so, my next question is going to feel a bit detached. I kind of want to go back a little bit on a career now that I have all these wonderful things you've shared about how you do your work. If you look at your trajectory so far, what accomplishment would you say you value the most, and perhaps we can talk about a little bit how you work has evolved, which you've touched on and what challenges you have faced on the way, and you've talked about changing schools and how that that has created both challenges but has also opened up space to create new things, including the Hub for example. So, looking at your trajectory so far and the way that it has evolved, what would you say – and you're still working, so if things will continue to evolve – what accomplishment today do you feel or do you value the most?

FB: I would say... I mean if I if I talk about it, it's just a hub and it's not... I don't think it's a small accomplishment. But I am thinking about it as a little bit beyond the heart, right. And I think the value for me, besides all of the things I've published, awards, recognition, whatever, you know. There's something about where I am today. The kind of work that I'm able to do through the space like the hub, that is really deeply meaningful for me, because, and this is what I spoke about in my inaugural lecture… It feels like the full circle kind of moment and that's why I said it's like, you know, the creation of the space that I would have wanted when I was there as a student, so it feels like a full circle moment. It feels like I've been able to, now begin to do the work that I find deeply, deeply meaningful to me, to *me*, personally. And I'm able to do that without apology. So, the title of my inaugural lecture was something about finding hope and healing while doing work on violence and trauma. And so, my work has shifted to now begin to talk about joy, pleasure, healing, decolonial love, you know? Stuff that I'm wanting to write more about and that's why I feel like a full circle kind of thing because like, the opportunity to be able

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to think about things like that alongside all of this work that I have done and continue to do on violence and trauma and injustice and inequality and, you know, just feels really, really meaningful. And so, yes, that part of that story is the creation of the Hub. And I guess that... I guess one another way of saying that same thing is to say that the opportunity… the Hub we created was that – and we wrote about somewhere– so we created the Hub so that students will come. Students and others will come into the space, can come there. as their full selves. And so what's been really meaningful for me, 20 years into an academic career as an academic psychologist, has been the opportunity I've created to bring my full self into my work, to begin to ask questions and write about the things that, like, I talk about some of the work that I do as *heart work*, to be able to do the heart work in a discipline, you know, just is really, very meaningful. So, if I won the lottery, I don't play the lottery, I always joke and I'll say, if I won the lottery tomorrow, I'd still do the work I do because I love doing it.

AN: That is wonderful. I feel like there's very few things that are as the colonial, as joy, to be honest, and pleasure. I'm personally very happy for you that this is where you're at. I think that's beautiful.

FB: Thank you.

AN: So, my next question would be about mentorship: Who have been your mentors, and how do you see yourself or if this is something that you see yourself as, for your students?

FB: Yeah. So that's I think that's why, when I mentioned the people who were teaching me early on in my career in psychology, my studies, I would mark those people as mentors because it's the people who are working on questions of race and psychology. It's the people doing feminist psychology, which included my supervisor for my master's and my PhD work, you know. And so early on those when those people were my mentors, you know that Tammy [Tamara] Shefer, Cheryl De La Rey. I don't think they necessarily saw themselves as mentors, but just like opening up the possibility. Of being able to do feminist work in this discipline. And then allow me to see a future for myself in the discipline. I actually do mentor work in different ways. I think in some ways I do see myself as a mentor to my students, in a less formal way than just the work on the thesis, but I think that that kind of collaborative space we've opened up in the Hub has allowed for other ways of engaging with each other that go beyond just work on the thesis. Which has been great. But I also for the past few years or so, for five years, have been mentoring doctoral students in the region, in the Western Cape, as a doctoral mentor for the National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences. I also work on a mentoring program for the next generation of professors, it's called The Next Generation Professoriate program at our institution. So, you know, work as a mentor. And so, yeah, I mean, it feels like that's the next thing. It's felt like the stage of my career now where we have felt like it's all possible to do that kind of work, it is really rewarding.

AN: Yeah. Excellent. Thank you. And if that's OK when we'll be sending you just a side note, the transcript should help us with the spelling for the names that you've given me.

FB: Sure, sure.

[1:05:31]

AN: OK, brilliant. I do want to ask this as well in terms of your own experience living at different intersectionality and any experiences of discrimination and how that has, you know, how you've dealt with it and how that has influenced you even perhaps, as your identity as a feminist, whether or not that has created any kind of tension, it sounds like in many ways you you've had, at least early on, some mentors that have supported your development. But yes, I wonder if you've experienced discrimination based on your gender, ethnicity, different orientation, age, or just being a feminist, and if so, if you can tell me about it and what that was like and how you've how you've dealt with it.

FB: Hmm. Yeah, I think definitely. There's been lots of things over the career, you know, but definitely early on as I was establishing myself as an academic in this in this so very white institution, they would definitely experience that stand out. There's definitely a way in which I felt I was moving through the institute, moving through the world, was a kind of identity imposed on me from others, so there was a sense in which people engaged with me at this historically white, still institutionally white, you know, symbolically white institution. That's how people engage with me as this, you know, black women, racialized *colored* because, of course apartheid also created these categories of blackness. And that was definitely felt, at the institution, whether it was in my department, from colleagues, in departmental meetings. Whether it was from students too in the department, who, you know, the kind of undermining experiences that you would get from students. For many years, at the 4th year level, we call it Honors, it's kind of like, you know, one level up from your undergraduate degree. In psychology, it's when at that point students can work with their supervisor. And so, for a long time, it takes a long time to establish yourself, you know, few years to settle in before students get to know you and your work and then choose you as a supervisor.

AN: Right.

FB: So, student at the time, had a choice, of who they could work with as a supervisor. I was finding that students were not necessarily choosing me as a supervisor, white students in particular. Not choosing me as a supervisor and I was known in the department for my qualitative expertise, I was one of, at the time, probably one of the few people who taught qualitative research. So, they wouldn't choose me as a supervisor even though they were doing qualitative projects, but they would like to consult with me.

AN: Hmm.

FB: Or advice around their thesis. And sometimes the suggestion even came from the supervisor. But why don't you talk to Floretta about that? And at first, I was generous with my time, and I would, but afterwards I kind of noted the pattern and I just, I didn't feel like that's something I should do. And obviously there was a reason why I didn't choose me. And then I stopped, I stopped consulting with other people, saying well, you have to talk to your supervisor. Surely you chose the supervisor because of the expertise they bring in terms of being able to guide you. So that was one example. I mean, the other examples were things like, the institutional stuff, you know, one of the one of the things is I was beginning to establish myself beginning to gather a

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pool of like, you know, there was more interest in in students wanting to work with me for supervision at master's and PhD level. And there was an institutional thing where for your first PhD student, you have to have a mentoring co-supervisor. And so, I had that for my first PhD student, I mean that was the other thing as well. So, there are two stories, actually [laughs], how much time do you have? No, I'm kidding. There're two interwoven stories. The one was that, in this major inter-supervision relationship, the majoring co-supervisor was a white man who at that point had supervised the most PhD students, probably in the faculty. And we were working together with my student was a black woman. And we were having this supervision meeting the three of us. And I was being positioned by this colleague as also a student in the meeting. So, but it's it felt like the feedback that was going to the student was I was included in that as student. And once I started to notice that, I just, I then made it clear that I didn't want to have supervision meetings together. That it's up to the student to meet with us separately, and it's a practice I've maintained in supervision. I think those supervision relationships can be really rewarding, but that experience kind of just, you know, and so. I mean, I don't think I still do it, but at least for a few years afterwards, I said, if you want a co-supervisor, you have to meet with that prof, and then meet with me and you have to figure out the feedback and how you're going to integrate with both of us then and left to the student. So, there was that. And then the other thing was also around PhD supervision. So, we had this mentoring relationship. Then I was going to agree to my second PhD student. And this is after I graduated multiple master students but not yet graduated this this PhD student that was being co-supervised. And I agreed to supervise the student, it goes through the faculty, and I get a letter from the Faculty Graduate School of Humanities to say, we note that you've done a supervisor, you haven't graduated a PhD student yet, and you need to appoint a mentoring co-supervisor, according to the rule. I felt like there was some undertones, racial undertones to the reason why I now needed to, even though, I mean I get the rule, but I think it was being applied discreetly, when in other places might not have been. And yeah, I think there was some sinister note around the letter I received, which have been challenged. I wrote a long e-mail, and I said, well, this is my track record with supervision so far, and you know, all the students have graduated with distinction. I don't think that it's warranted for me or justified to ask me to appoint a co-supervisor and they agreed. So yeah. Some example of discrimination, which has been, mostly I think, based on race… but race and class are so intertwined in South Africa, and then of course gender. I think, they're all intersectional.

AN: Yes, yes, absolutely. OK, so what advice would you give to, or perhaps that you already give to feminists, perhaps even feminist activists, dr the colonial feminists and scholars or budding scholars and students who are entering psychology right now? Perhaps these are the experiences that you've had that you could share, but. If not, to students who will be, to myself as a student, but to students who will be reading this interview, are the advice that you would give, as they enter psychology.

FB: I think there'll be lots of different forms of advice I would give, but maybe the one thing that comes to mind is to say, like I would advise people to find the work that moves you. To find the

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work that moves you to make effort to do that work, but also part of the effort to doing that work is to understand why it moves you. Find the work that moves you and try to understand why it moves you. I think that's important. But then, I think it's also important to find your community. It's actually really important to find your community because for a long time in psychology, despite the fact that I came into a discipline where I saw, where I had mentors and I saw people that showed me the possibility of moving forward in this discipline. I was still lonely in my department for a long time. It is very lonely work. And so, I think finding community and building community where you don't find it is really, really important for doing the work that moves you.

AN: I think that's great advice. And perhaps this next question can also connect to that: how do you navigate personal and professional demands in your own life?

FB: I think it was my father earlier in my career. I was two years into the job, and then I had twins. So that is, uhm… that will… you know, raising a young family and building a career was difficult, but I had help, family, which was really important. I think now, the balancing feels a bit, of course there in moments where it feels really intense, but now the balancing feels a bit more manageable to do that I think that… It's difficult to answer this question without thinking about the demands of institutions, neoliberal institutions, you know, making little political again, as we do as feminists, but you know, [laughs] but it's true, right? The demands on us as academics have amplified, like, there's so much more you need to do, the admin, the… It's just like it's never ending. And as of age, I've gotten better at being all over to understand that other people's urgencies don't have to be my urgency. That other people don't understand, don't have sight at all, everything I have on my plate, and I don't need to apologize for that. But you know, so I guess, it's just one way of saying that I've learned, and that I see the kind of ways in which people are burning out, trying to do it all, the ways in which the institution keeps piling, you know, I kind of see the bigger picture, try and see the bigger picture, and what that means for me, and then allow that bigger picture to help me set clearer boundaries about what I'm able to do or not do, what I say yes to and what I don't. And I think that allows me then to balance this idea that, yes, this job is important to me, I love what I do, but it's not all that I am. So, a mom, I'm a partner, a daughter and a sister, a friend, you know, and to keep those other identities as important to who I am as a person.

AN: Yes. That's great. To not just being accountable to the university, but to yourself as well, yeah.

FB: Yeah. Yeah.

AN: I will ask maybe three more kind of interrelated questions that might kind of be answered within each other. But to end this, what do you think are the inroads that feminists have made in psychology and what roadblocks remain or what remains to be accomplished and changed in the field?

FB: Inroad that feminists have made, wow… That's a big question. I think for me the key thing

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has been understanding how gender, race, class, sexuality, other identities, how identities operate. Not just as variable, right. For me, that's been the key, one of the key inroads, what I think has been really profound and has also shaped my work, is about. And if I think about it now, I didn't mention it earlier, but one but one of the key things for me about the decolonial feminist psychology is that it allows us to hold complexity. It allows us to, and the complexity of subjectivity has been, for me, one of the key things that I've learned from feminist psychology that have been foundational to all of the work that I've done so the holding of complexity but the complexity of subjectivity and identity. And that's yeah, I mean that's the big the big thing, yes.

AN: Excellent. So, what do you think are the next steps for, perhaps specifically to colonial feminist psychology, as a way of intervening in feminism itself, in psychology in general, or even society, what do you think are the next steps? What do you feel the next steps?

FB: I don't know if I could think about it as next steps, but I do think that, I think that a challenge – let's put it as a challenge – I think that the challenge for us is now to begin to see the ways in which a particular kind of feminism has become mainstream within psychology itself. And for us to interrogate and disrupt that if it needs disruption. And so, that involves thinking about publishing. It involves thinking about just the reach of feminist psychology globally and weigh. It dominates. Yeah, I think, i feels like the…And maybe I'm overstating this a little bit, but let me just say it because that's what's prompted for me by your question, but it feels a bit like the critique of Black feminism, the black feminist critique, so I would say now like, it feels a little bit like maybe the black feminist and decolonial feminist critique could be brought to the field, not just psychology... Because we've been very good at critiquing psychology. Oh, that's our favorite thing to do, it was such a lot to say, you know [laughs], and we could go on and on and on, there always stuff to say, because you know they really messed it up. But I think it's the self-interrogation, the self-reflective work that we now need to do.

AN: Fantastic. This is making me think and the idea of mixing black feminism in decolonial Feminism, or decoloniality. And I'm sorry, I feel like I have so many questions that I could ask you, but I'm trying to close it down. This is making me think also of your recent book which I can't wait to read, that you co-authored about…I'm gonna say the name wrong, but about a Pan African feminism.

FB: Yes. Pan-Africanism and Psychology in Decolonial Times.

AN: Yes. UM. And yes, just quickly, perhaps if you want to talk about it, if how it came about and if and there's *decolonial* there, you are also a *feminist* psychologist, so that's going to be there. And I wonder if this is also connected: These ideas of connecting different schools like uh, Black feminist work and decolonial work. And these ideas of Pan Africanism how do these …

FB: come together? Yeah. They do come together. And I think, I'm glad you asked that question because I think we're also operating in a moment with decolonial feminism…and we certainly have benefited from that. So, it's not to look at it with complete scorn, but we're also operating

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in a moment with decolonial work, decolonial feminism has become the buzz word, *intersectionality*, the buzzword right. And I talk about this often and when we talk about decolonial work because it's like, you know, when institutions like a historically white institution that's been struggling for decades to transform puts out a call for decolonial grants, then you've got to be worried, you know, I think we benefited from that, you know. For me it's like, you do the feminist work, you take the grant and then you [expletive] things up a little bit [laughs]. But, in the moment where decolonial feminism has become kind of fashionable, there's also geographical story, a geopolitical geographical story to tell about it, right? That often the roots of decolonial feminism are a South American story Latin American story. And I think for us that book was important because of… it started the conversation that in that book is about where we ground *our* decolonial feminism from. And part of that is the Pan African story. So, I mean, I spoke to you earlier about my own decolonial feminism being grounded in my own work on gender and sexual violence, but another part of the story is that, for me, African feminism, African feminisms, has always been decolonial.

AN: Right.

FB: Right. So, we ground our decolonial feminist work in African feminism, but it's just because African feminisms haven't called themselves decolonial feminists. So, there is also something, I mean, it's the same critique that's been made of intersectionality. There's something about coining the term, but there's something… so it's interesting because I have personal experience with this. When I was writing my honors thesis, I was writing about intersectionality, before the term, or I think at the time the term intersectionality was being coined, you know, but I didn't reference Crenshaw, you know, in my thesis, but I was talking about the kind of feminism that is, I think I don't know what term I use, *multi systemic* or something you know. And that was grounded in African feminism. And so, I think it's important that we also trace these lineages and that's part of the story of the Pan-African psychology book. So, it traces the decolonial feminism, *our* decolonial feminism, in the idea that African Feminisms have always been concerned with questions of imperialism. Even though we're not necessarily naming the decolonization discourse in the same way. And then, and the book, I guess coming from again, our shared interests, mine in the African feminist gender violence field, and Shose's work on institutional racism.

AN: Excellent. Is there any question that, or anything else that I have not mentioned that you feel is important for me to know about you for everybody's gonna engage with your profile to know about you, or your career, your work or about psychology and general or decoloniality in general?

FB: Like I've spoken so much, I'm pretty sure the answer to that is yes, but I can't think of what to follow the yes up with. So maybe when I read the transcript, you know, then I can maybe think of more things I could have said, but right now I can't solve it too much already. Yes, that's fair.

AN: You have not. No, I could speak to you much longer. So, thank you very much. I will stop the recording. **[1:30:53]**

END