Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Irene Frieze

Interviewed by Alexandra Rutherford
Long Beach, CA
June 23, 2006

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IF: Irene Frieze, Interview Participant

AR: Alexandra Rutherford, Interviewer

AR – The way we'll start is that I'll get you to tell me a little bit about how you first became involved in SPSSI, how and when you first got involved in the organization.

IF - Well, I think probably as many other people, I got involved as a graduate student.

AR – Okay

IF – I was at UCLA and Bert Raven was there, and Jackie Goodchilds was there too, although I didn't really know her very well as a student. And he used to talk about it and at one point invited all the students to join and I said, "Wow this sounds great, I'll do that." So I joined at that time.

AR – Okay. And how did he present SPSSI to you?

IF – Well, this is a long time ago and I don't really remember, but I guess, doing/ interested in research that has policy implications. But I don't remember now how he described it.

AR – Okay. But on some level it appealed to you as a place where you could…

IF – Oh yeah. Sounded very exciting.

AR – Okay. At that point, let me ask you…

IF – And remember, this is back in the sixties

AR – Okay

IF – So that was the era when people were interested in these kinds of things.

AR – Yeah. Well tell me a little bit about that time. You were a graduate student.

IF – Yes.

AR – Can you tell me a little bit about your training in psychology?

IF – So I was a graduate student in personality psychology at UCLA.

AR – Okay.

IF – And that was a time, first of all, there were relatively few women.

AR – Yeah.

IF – And I had not had a woman professor at that point. I was an undergraduate at UCLA and there were no women around in any kind of faculty positions. There were people like Jackie, but they were in non-faculty, in non-tenure stream positions, who were very hidden and students really didn't have much contact with them.

AR – Okay.

IF – And when I applied for graduate school, I had good grades and I just naïvely assumed that I would have no problems getting into graduate school. And I wasn't admitted. I had been an undergraduate there, I was working with Peter Bentler as an undergraduate, and he had asked me what happened to graduate school and I told him that I didn't get admitted, and he seemed upset and said, "Well let me see if I can do something about that." And he was able to get me admitted to the personality program at UCLA, which was his program, but he had to use as the rationale for that the fact that I wasn't really a woman because I was also a math major; I was a joint mathematics-psychology major. So I didn't really fit the category of woman so they could maybe give me a chance.

AR – Wow.

IF – So it was a pretty rough time. And I was admitted without funding and I was further told that to stay in the program I had to be in the top third of all of my classes.

AR – Wow.

IF – It was a very competitive environment.

AR – And this was explicitly linked to your gender.

IF – This was very explicitly linked with my gender. So in those days people could be blatantly sexist, so they were.

AR – Right, right. What persuaded you that this would be a good field to get into?
IF – I don't know, that's an interesting question. I was thinking why did I do all this? Well at one point I had this fantasy that it might be fun to be in business. I had read Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*, and thought, oh wow, that sounds great, that might be fun.

And I dropped out of school for a while as an undergraduate and worked in a business setting, and the sexism there was so blatant in those days too.

AR – Wow. What kinds of experiences did you have there?

IF – Well I got a job for the telephone company and there were lots of women there, but they were all in very low status positions. And it was interesting because there was this woman in the group I was in, and she had a college degree, but she was essentially doing the same job I was doing as a high school graduate. And there were no places to go. That was it; that was as far as women could get in that setting, and we're talking about a major corporation, Bell Telephone, at that time.

AR – So the glass ceiling was very obvious.

IF – It was very very obvious, and very strong, and I realized that this wasn't going to work and I better get some education and get into a professional field.

AR – Okay.

IF - But I had no mentoring along the way, or no help. So I just kind of tried to do this on my own. I'm so happy that Peter Bentler was able to get me into that program or who knows what would have happened.

AR- Right.

IF - And I remember somebody else commenting to me, she had applied for law school, and she said she had called to find out what had happened to her application, and the woman just laughed and said, 'Well honey, we haven't looked at the men's applications yet. Maybe we'll take a few women after we figure out who we really want.' So it was very blatant in that field too. It seemed to be the case in all of them.

AR – Were you ever discouraged? Do you remember being discouraged?

IF – Oh yeah. I was very upset, worried about it, and upset about it.

AR – Can you describe for me the kind of family support you had for this? You didn't have academic mentors, how was your family in supporting you?

IF – Well that's an interesting question on family. Certainly my parents had always supported my getting an education and were very supportive of the intellectual parts of my life. My mother though had a Masters in chemistry, which was very unusual in those days, and had made the decision that if she wanted to get married and have a family, she had to drop out of her field. And so she did, and regretted that for the rest of her life. She wrote in her diaries, which we read after she died, about how painful that was for her to have to give up her profession, but she felt that she wanted to have kids and this was the sacrifice she had to make.

AR – Wow.

IF – My father was also a chemist and again very supportive, and he was a traditional man of the fifties.

AR – Right, so you weren't pushed in that direction, it was more self-motivated.

IF – Well, probably, but also they, well I should add this other little piece to my history which was that I kind of had to prove my credentials as a woman before I could psychologically feel comfortable doing this. So I dropped out of school and got married at the age of 19, and that was when I was working for Bell Telephone, and they were devastated by that.

AR – Oh really.

IF – They were very upset by that and they essentially said, "Well if you want to do this, you're on your own." So I didn't have that close contact with them after that, and had no support financially, so I was self-supporting after that.

AR – Wow. Did you remain married throughout graduate school?

IF – No, well I remained married throughout graduate school interestingly enough, but the year after I started working it was clear that this wasn't going to work and we got a divorce.

AR – Right, wow. Do you think that your being married had an influence on the perceptions people had of you in graduate school? I've heard other women say that they felt, in retrospect, the fact that they were married meant that they were not given priority for scholarships and so on and so forth.

IF – But see I never had those anyway. I was self-supporting all the way through graduate school.

AR – Okay.

IF – So I worked at places off campus and had other kinds of jobs, but I never got any kind of that support. So the fact that I was married was irrelevant in terms of that.

AR – Okay. Well tell what kinds of work you did in terms of your Ph.D.?

IF – Okay, I was in personality psychology and one of the faculty members there was Bernie Wiener and the whole field of attribution theory was just being developed at that time, and UCLA was the central area where that was being developed. So I was in a seminar that Bernie was running, in my beginning year, in my first year, and they were having a big conference there, we're at 1978, and you probably don't know this, but this

1978 book which became one of the core books for attribution theory was being written; so people were coming from all over the country and were having this big workshop there. And Bernie would go to that and then come to our graduate seminar and talk about the ideas; it was a very exciting intellectual environment.

AR – Oh I bet.

IF - And we all got very stimulated, and in fact, that seminar then produced a paper for that book, which because of my name being Frieze, was alphabetically second author; so that actually was Weiner, Frieze, Kukla, Reed, Rest, and Rosenbaum. That really helped my career to be the second author of that paper because people recognized my name from that. So we got very excited by this and started working on it and we were kind of a research team that then developed this area; how attributions applied to achievement situations.

AR – Okay. Who was your supervisor by the way?

IF – Well, when you say supervisor, you have to remember that I'm not working on campus so, my research supervisor was Bernie Weiner.

AR – Okay.

IF – But the other thing that happened was that there was this group of women, and we were kind of the first cohort of women in the graduate program, and we started talking to each other about women's issues. This is now the sixties, and the feminist movement, and I was very interested in feminist issues. I was involved in the establishment of the Los Angeles Women's Centre and I did a volunteer course there that I developed on psychology of women which didn't exist at that point as an area. And I was talking to the other students about it and we got excited about it. And none of the faculty, of course, had any interest in this and strongly discouraged of us from doing anything in this area. But because we were just so interested in this field, we formed our own little seminar group. We had that model of Bernie's seminar, and some of the other people that did this, and we said, okay we'll form our own little group. We then put on a conference, one of the early conferences on psychology of women. We got the first course done at UCLA and again we couldn't teach it technically because we were students and we weren't allowed to teach. But we got a faculty member who became the in-name supervisor. She wasn't a regular faculty member but she was a woman.

AR – Who was that? Do you recall?

IF – I could probably look it up but I can't remember her name. But she was not anybody who ever did anything after that.

AR – Okay.

IF – And we all then team taught it, so we all did lectures and stuff.

AR – Oh neat, neat. Do you remember who was in the group with you, the other students?

IF – Well we then got together and wrote one of the first textbooks.

AR – Oh, okay.

IF – So the other people involved were Jackie, who's now Jacquelynne ECCLES but she was Jackie Parsons there, Diane Ruble, Gail Zellman, and Paula Johnson.

AR – Okay. Well tell me, I know that you've been a member of AWP for some time.

IF – Yeah, I was one of the founding members of AWP.

AR – Well tell me a little bit about that.

IF – So again all these exciting things were happening during that period and those of us kind of getting interested in feminist issues who were also psychologists…as a graduate student, as a UCLA student in those days, we were very, kind of, isolated from the rest of the country, and very few of either the faculty or the students went to meetings. But I did. So I started going to APA and going to these meetings at a fairly early stage in my career. And I got to know these other people, and we were all young people and working on this, but we would just meet and talk. And there were several meetings that I went to where we would just have AWP meetings where we developed that organization.

AR – Yeah. Were you at that early town hall meeting where Chesler and Henley got up and talked about APA's obligation to women and so on and so forth.

IF – Yeah.

AR – Can you describe what it felt like at that point to be a psychologist, and a woman, and a feminist, and to have all these things going on.

IF – Well again I think I have been kind of talking about it. I saw myself in a very kind of unusual position. I had had this unusual position all the way through school. So I was always unusual in lots of ways.

AR – Did it ever seem difficult to combine your values, that is feminist values, and what you were doing as a psychologist? How was that?

IF – Well again we got no support for doing it, so when you say difficult…we just did it. We weren't encouraged in any way to do it, but we just did it. And at that point I felt pretty secure that they weren't going to kick me out. I already had publications and stuff, so we felt that we could do what we needed to do. So we did what we wanted to do.

AR - And it looks like from your CV that you've spent most of your career at the University of Pittsburgh.

IF – Yeah. So that was my first job and I was actually hired…another thing I did at UCLA was that I was working to develop the women's studies program there. So as a graduate student I was one of the people working to set that up because it didn't exist there. And so the University of Pittsburgh had a job that was part Psychology, part Women's Studies, and I figured that that was a perfect job for me. So I applied for that job and got hired, and I've stayed there ever since.

AR – And it looks as though you also set up Women's Studies there.

IF – That's what we were hired to do, to set up the program at the University of Pittsburgh.

AR – Tell me about that process, about setting up a Women's Studies program at that time.

IF – Well, we had a mandate from the faculty actually. The faculty senate had voted to set up this program to get these three positions set up. So we had a historian, a person from English literature, and myself. And the historian and I were both brand new out of graduate school; neither of us had finished our PhDs at that time. And the one senior person, in quotes, was Mary Briscoe, who was at the associate professor level. So we really had no senior people, no tenured people to set it up. And we were very worried about making sure that the program had academic credibility because we knew that if we didn't do that, that the program would, as soon as this push, this political push stopped, that they would just make the program disappear, which is what did happen in other places. So we worked very hard to have it have credibility and be a very legitimate and academic program. And we had a lot of, in those days especially, we had a lot of people who wanted us to be much more active in the community. And we just felt that we really couldn't do that, that we had to focus on doing the academic piece of it.

AR – So that it would be around for the long haul.

IF – Right, right.

AR – So it's very much a feeling, I take it, that the university made this, or supported this, largely because of the outside political pressure.

IF – Oh no question about that. That is exactly how it happened. The faculty demanded that this be done.

AR – Okay. And in other places I have heard to that students demanded that they…

IF – The students were active too, you're absolutely right. There were some very active undergraduate, as well as graduate, students involved with that. And they were on the

search committees for us and they were very active on the steering committee for the Women's Studies program, and developing the program.

AR – What was your impression, or what were your impressions of how Psychology as a department or discipline felt about Women's Studies?

IF – Well I was told, even though my position was Psychology and Women's Studies, I was told that nothing I did in Women's Studies counted.

AR – Wow. Why was that?

IF – Again, things were pretty blatant in those days and they were just overtly said. 'We're not going to count any of that. It's not serious, it's not creditable, it's not academic. It doesn't count. So you're going to get tenure, if you get it' and you know they *[made it clear]* "If you get it", 'on the basis of your other stuff.' That it's basically this attribution work we hired you for and that's why we want you.

AR – Okay. So anything that you do in Women's Studies is on your own.

IF – Is simply considered volunteer.

AR – I'm curious about this issue. Psychology seems to have played a role in women's studies largely because of particular individuals who happen to be psychologists.

IF – Right.

AR – But then as a discipline, it seems to kind of have receded from view in terms of current women's studies programs. I mean, they're interdisciplinary programs by nature, and psychology…my impression, having spoken with a lot of women who have been involved in starting up women's studies at their universities, is that psychology has been pretty resistant to remaining involved and/or having any kind of cross-communication or collaboration.

IF – That's my sense as well.

AR- Do you have a sense of why that is?

IF – Well, I don't think psychology ever really was interested in this issue, number one, but I think the other side is that women's studies is so humanities based in so many schools and there's kind of an anti-empiricism. So I was there, so our program never got that way, because I was there as one of the founders, but I've seen that happen in many other programs. They really actually dislike psychologists because we're too empirical and not into the feminist theory kinds of things that they're doing. So psychology hasn't been welcomed in on the one side, and psychologists haven't been encouraging of their faculty to do this on the other. So it takes a fairly strong person, I think, to bridge both of those gaps and make those steps.

AR – Yeah. Nancy Russo has spoken about that too, the kind of reciprocal relationship, or antagonistic relationship, that women's studies kind of views psychologists as too, I don't know, too empirical, or not embracing some of the postmodern approaches that have been embraced in women's studies.

IF – Exactly, that's exactly my experience.

AR – Well let me get back to SPSSI. You've served a couple of terms on council. It looks like one that was in the late seventies, or mid to late seventies, and then one in the nineties.

IF – Right.

AR – Let's start in the seventies. First of all, how did being a council member come about and what do you recall about the issues that were facing the organization and your involvement at that point?

IF – Well again I had had this long history of involvement with AWP and so I was interested in psychology organizations and I had had a long term interest in SPSSI. And so I thought, probably naïvely I realize now, but I thought, oh I could get involved in SPSSI just like I am in AWP. And so I started running for election to council, and of course I didn't get elected because people didn't know who I was. But I kept putting my name in and eventually I did get elected, I think it was probably the third time I ran. And the people that were there were very supportive. So I found some welcoming people, both men and women, which was very nice, in SPSSI. And I remember, I can't remember who was president at that time, but one of the jobs they gave me was APA program chair, which for a junior person was a big deal. It was a very exciting job to have and I was excited to do that; happy to do that. So I just felt very welcomed by SPSSI and thought that was good.

AR – Some people have mentioned that they feel that SPSSI was a little bit late in recognizing women's issues and gender issues; that it took a little while for SPSSI, given that it's an activist organization. Did you feel that at all in the seventies?

IF – Not really. I remember Cynthia Deutsch was on the committee, on council at that time, and I think she was president during my time period. So there were very strong active women already involved. They weren't necessarily doing women's studies research, but there were women there. And Jackie Goodchilds was editor of the journal at that point.

AR – Okay. So there were some pretty strong female role models there already.

IF – Yeah. And by the way Jackie, here's another link, and I can't remember if this was before or after I was on council, but I did get to know Jackie actually after I graduated. And again, we were writing this book on the psychology of women and we talked to

Jackie and said, hey, maybe we could do a *JSI* [*Journal of Social Issues*] on this. And there was one early one, in the early seventies, that was heavily used by those of us interested in this field. We used it as a textbook for our class at one point, but it was a very early issue and it had some problems and we wanted to do an updated issue, and she encouraged us to do that. So that was great too. So here we are, untenured people putting together a *JSI* issue, and she gave us that opportunity, and that doesn't happen very often. And that was again coming from SPSSI, so a lot of welcome to us.

AR – Right, or a lot of support and mentoring it sounds like.

IF – Yeah.

AR – Let me ask some more about that first psychology of women book you worked on. Where did you get the material? What did you draw on?

IF – Well we actually did some of the research ourselves and what we tried to do, and that book had a very heavy theoretical aspect to it. So what we tried to do was take theories in different areas, and we had this ongoing seminar for about three years that generated this book, so people would come and say, "Well what do we know about political psychology, and where do we see any reference to gender, and what are the questions here." And so Gayle Zellman, for example, wrote that chapter based on a lot of theory and a lot of speculation about what might be, and then we also generated research based on that.

AR – Okay. And tell me when you started to get involved in Division 35. Obviously it wasn't founded until '73, '74.

IF – Yeah, and actually, when it was founded I was right at this period when I was finishing my degree and starting my new job. So I wasn't involved in the very beginning of it, but I certainly knew a lot of the people involved.

AR – Yeah, well there was the AWP and 35 overlap.

IF – Right, right. So I got involved fairly early in Division 35.

AR – How did you feel about having a sort of inside APA organization?

IF – Well I think we all wanted that. I don't think we saw it as inside-outside as clearly then as it probably has become now.

AR – Yeah. So you felt fairly comfortable about there being a voice in APA for women?

IF – Oh I thought that was good.

AR – And do you remember what role you played there in the beginning, when you first got involved?

IF – Wow. I have to think about that. I don't remember very clearly, but I was president in the mid eighties, so I clearly was actively involved. And I actually would have run earlier for president but there was someone else who was a friend of mine who said, 'I really need to do this because I need it for my tenure.' So we're talking about very junior people taking those roles at that time. And so I said, okay, I'll wait a year, and I ran the following year.

AR – Okay. And who was, I know Michele Wittig was president in the early eighties, I think, and I don't remember who might have come in between.

IF – Yeah, there was, oh I can't think of her name either, oh Mary Parlee, she was doing work on the menstrual cycle.

AR – Alright. Well you became a council member in SPSSI again in the nineties.

IF – Right.

AR – What changes, how was it different being there in the seventies?

IF – Well one of the big issues in the seventies was financial concerns because the organization at that time was having a lot of financial problems. It was in Ann Arbor, it was a much smaller organization, and at that point the major revenue was coming from books. And we had some books that had been contracted but weren't being written, and so that was a constant source of discussion, what could we do about books, how could we get more revenue.

AR – Right.

IF – And I actually did a SPSSI book, I think I published it in the late seventies. So I co-edited a SPSSI book. So I was attempting to help out with that problem. [The book never made much money.] So people did step in and try to do things. So I was kind of staying actively involved in SPSSI along the way. I did that special issue in the seventies and did another special issue of JSI in the eighties, on victimization, and then I did one in the nineties. So I had already done three issues of *Journal of Social Issues* before I became editor. So I was staying active and involved in SPSSI throughout that period.

AR – Yeah. And what issues faced the organization in the nineties?

IF – So then in the nineties, well we were having another central office problem. So there were some problems in the ways central office was being run. So again there were a lot of those fiscal issues coming in.

AR – Was this the era of Linda Furstenau?

IF – Yes. Exactly.

AR – And how did you feel, I mean, were there conversations at that point about moving the office to DC?

IF – Yes.

AR – And give me some of the flavor of the conversations at that point.

IF – Well people were pushing very strongly to do more with the policy and felt that that would be a good move to move to Washington and do that. I was always worried about doing that myself. I felt that it would be too expensive for the organization. It has turned out to cost far more than they said it would when they were making the plans. So some of my fears have turned out to be true. But I think people are still very enthusiastic about it, as policy survey has shown. So the membership seems to want that, so I can certainly support that.

AR – How do you feel that the policy mission is carrying forward?

IF – Well I don't think we've done a very good job of that yet. I think we're still trying to figure out how to do that. I don't think it's something we're trained to do. I personally see myself as more interested in the psychological study of social issues than in the policy aspect.

AR – Right, right.

IF – I thought one of the talks yesterday about how you persuade the decision makers was very interesting. And again it just shows how far anything we normally do is from what would be a persuasive message.

AR – Yeah. There has been, I was recently reading one of the fiftieth anniversary articles written by Harold Proshansky and he was talking about some of the ongoing conversations and tensions within SPSSI, ones that he had observed in his years in the organization. And one of the ones he delineated, which I think is still an issue, is to advocate or not to advocate. He framed it with that phrase. What is your position on the advocate or not to advocate issue within SPSSI?

IF – Well again as I've kind of said, I think many people think it's a good idea. I personally don't feel that I'm very good at it, so I don't think I have the skills to do it very well. I've attempted to a few times. For instance, I've gone to state legislature and tried to advocate and have been very unsuccessful; I had not done this very well. So I don't think we know how to do this. I think we're trying to do something we're not very good at and I feel that we're putting a lot of effort into that and not getting much result from it. That's my personal view. If the membership wants us to try, I'm happy to try to do that the best way we can. I'm just skeptical that we're ever going to be very good at it.

AR – So your position is more that you feel that it is outside your scope of expertise, or psychologist's scope of expertise, as opposed to this isn't something we should do as scientists.

IF – Right. I think if we knew how to do that, it would be great. I just don't think we know how to do that.

AR – Yeah. Fair enough. It's hard to know how to do everything.

IF – Right.

AR – Okay. Well you've also, I'm skipping around a bit but people's lives skip around. What do you feel are SPSSI's strengths as an organization?

IF – Well again I think the things we do well are encourage and publish research that has policy implications. The psychological study of social issues, which I see as our core mission, is what I think we do well.

AR – What do you think have been, in the course of SPSSI's history, some of its greatest successes?

IF – Well I guess the Brown vs. Board of Education.

AR – Everybody says the Brown v. Board!

IF – Yeah, it's one of the one's obviously. I think we did have a role in this recent affirmative action decision with the Supreme Court. We wrote one of the briefs that I think APA adopted, adopted our briefs, so I think we've been successful there. But again, I don't claim to have a lot of policy expertise, so I don't really know where our policy stuff has had an impact. It's not clear to me.

AR – Right. Well of the three P's, which do you think SPSSI has been most devoted to or contributed most to.

IF – Prejudice I think is the area, well we've certainly published the most on. We have very little on peace, and we have a little on poverty, but not much. Prejudice has really been our major mission.

AR – And since early on.

IF – Since very early on. I know you know, but we've gone back and looked at the tables of contents for all of the *JSI* issues and if you go back there, again you see prejudice coming up over and over again, but the others, occasionally you'll see things, but not very often.

AR – Right. Have you seen or have you, gosh, in your almost thirty year involvement with SPSSI...

IF – More than that. It's closer to forty.

AR – Forty. What changes have you seen? I know it's a real broad question, but I'll leave it broad.

IF – Well when you say changes I don't think it's one trend. We've gotten certainly a lot slicker, we're a bigger organization, we have a lot more money. Things like the briefings…I don't think we could have even conceived of anything like that happening in the seventies. So in that sense we've gotten more polished, more professional.

AR – What about membership? Have there been changes in the kinds of people SPSSI attracts?

IF – Well yeah because there was that whole cohort of us that came in in the sixties and seventies, and now we're aging and we're still here. So the big challenge of course has been bringing in younger people and continuing, and making the organization more diverse.

AR – How successful do you feel SPSSI has been in its diversity mission?

IF – Well again it's been up and down. Right now council is pretty white, which is too bad.

AR – When do you think SPSSI has been most successful with that?

IF – Oh I don't know. I would have to go back historically and look. But there's certainly been periods when council has been much more diverse than it is now.

AR – Yeah. I wonder, and again this is just anecdotal, but I wonder with the formation of things like Division 45 and other organizations that may speak more to ethnic minority issues, more directly, if that siphons off some folks.

IF – I think it definitely has.

AR – I mean, people can only do so much.

IF – That's right. And again, the lesbian issue as well, the same thing. That group is now a separate group. So we have other diverse groups that have gone off in their own groups, as you say.

AR – How do you think AWP and 35 have responded to this challenge to be more diverse and inclusive? In some ways I guess I'm asking you to compare it to SPSSI, but not necessarily.

IF – Well I think Division 35 has been much more successful than AWP has. Division 35 has kind of had these different groups, and I can't remember the technical term for them, but they have a structural place in the organization; there are slates for officers on the executive committee. So that one has been much more successful, Division 35. AWP I think is a very aging group and it's very aware of that. It's really struggling at this point.

AR – Right. Do you have any sense of why it's not attracting young blood?

IF – Well it seems that the young students are just more career-oriented than they used to be, and they're not as interested in the politically active groups. And so if they're interested in women's issues at all, they're going to join Division 35, but not necessarily AWP.

AR – That's not seen as a road to professional advancement as much?

IF – Right.

AR – And maybe there isn't a sense that the camaraderie or collegiality is a step towards career advancement as much?

IF – Well maybe not. And I'm not that sure that AWP is that welcoming to young people because it's such an aged organization.

AR – Okay.

IF – If you look at the leadership, it's very old.

AR – See I didn't know this. I have not actually, and not because I'm not interested, it's just a matter of time, but I haven't been involved in AWP. Not because I'm not interested, just because you split your resources in so many different ways. I didn't know it was an aging kind of group. I had no idea. I actually have a couple of close friends and colleagues who are just a little bit older than me, who are pretty active in it. So I had really never thought about it. But I'm hoping to go. Sharon is going to be hosting it the year after next, so I'm definitely going to go when they host it in Memphis. That's interesting. Are you still involved in AWP?

IF – I run the distinguished publication award group right now, but I'm going to step out of that now, because I just can't do everything.

AR – Yeah. Well you've got a busy year coming up. Tell me a little bit about some of your goals for you presidential year of SPSSI.

IF - Well people have been asking me about that and I've been kind of brainstorming about that, but every time I start thinking about that, I of course start thinking, well we have to do central office first. So I just feel that if I can get central office in good shape

this year, and we've got all these new publication things starting. So I think we have a lot of things in transition right now and I just see this as a year of instability and starting some kind of new push, I think, is a mistake. I just think we have to get things back on track.

AR – Yeah. I certainly resonate with that one. A lot of the conversations at council even the other day were, well can't do any of this without central office getting sorted out, and the website and the computers getting sorted out, and that kind of stuff. It sounds like it'll be a big job.

IF – Oh yeah. I guess the one other thing I can say, but again it's not a big policy thing, but I just feel that we need to reach out to our membership more. With central office not functioning as well as it might have for quite a while now, a lot of people are feeling shut out and they ask questions, and I've had people complain to me about this, but they try to contact central office and never get responses; they feel that SPSSI is this group of people that talk to each other and that they're not welcoming of anybody else. And one thing that I'm going to be personally trying to do, and have already started trying to do, is to reach out to people. And so by taking on the administrative handbook, which is trying to write down what our procedures are, and it's been very difficult because there's nothing there, and I can't get any information. And so I've been trying to contact different people, and I can see now that I'm going to start using that more and more in terms of getting new people into the organization

AR – Okay.

IF – And I will be writing to the different committee chairs and saying, well this is what we have for you now, and we have to think about your committee next year; do you know any new people we might bring in? And so I'm going to try and bring in and recruit people through that process.

AR – Yeah. I wonder, it seems like that is a problem for a lot of Divisions, anyway, of the APA. It's certainly a conversation that I hear over and over again in a lot of places. It's a challenge.

IF – Yeah. I was at a Division APA conference for division leaders, incoming presidents, and this is one of the things they talked about for APA in general. That most of the divisions are losing members.

AR – Yeah. What is SPSSI's relationship with APS?

IF – Well it's been pretty close. We've had people who have been very active in the governance of APS and involved with SPSSI council, so there's been a close relationship there, and a lot of hostility, I feel, towards APA. I'm probably one of the more pro APA people that's been active in SPSSI.

AR – What are the origins of that hostility?

IF – Well people feel that APA has been too focused on practice, to focused on clinicians, and not giving enough attention to the science aspects. But one thing I think APA does far better than SPSSI is policy stuff. So I think we have things to learn from them. They have people like our Marshall Fellows and so on that are at APA and SPSSI as well.

AR – It would seem somewhat of a natural alliance, the public interest directorate with SPSSI. I was kind of curious, as a newcomer to SPSSI, why there was such, why there appears to be so much tension in terms of forging relationships with places like the Public Interest Directorate.

IF – I think that's really sad. For example, I was mentioning to Beth [Shinn] about Gwen Keita who is now the head of the Public Interest Directorate, that she's a SPSSI member and we should get her involved in SPSSI things, and she doesn't even know her. I've known Gwen for years because she was very active in the women's groups. So those are the kinds of people I think we need to get active and involved with SPSSI.

AR – Yeah. Definitely. There are people, lots of overlapping people, that are Division 9 people and Division 35 people and APA people. Martha Mednick strikes me as another one, and Rhoda Unger, I mean there are so many you could just rattle them off. Somebody mentioned the other day, and I think it may have been Michele Wittig, something that I hadn't thought about. She said that she felt that Division 35 was born in some ways out of a dissatisfaction…well she said that Martha Mednick had felt that SPSSI wasn't responsive enough to women's issues and that this was one of the motivating factors to form Division 35, but I hadn't actually thought about that before. Was that your perception or a piece of the motivation anyway?

IF – That's interesting. I guess I never, see my women's involvement probably started before my SPSSI involvement so I never looked to SPSSI to meet that need. I always saw this other channel. They're a little older than I am so they were involved at an earlier point.

AR – Yeah. I hadn't thought of it either. I hadn't heard anyone articulate it quite that way. Okay, well, I've been asking a lot of the folks I've been interviewing for the Division 35 program, and there is overlap between the two, how their feminist identities emerged. How and when did they kind of form, at least a very self-conscious feminist identity? Do you have any sense of that in your own life? Sometimes it's hard for people to articulate.

IF – Well I remember as a middle school student writing a paper on women and ancient Greece. So I've had a very long term interest. And I was always interested in female heroines in stories, so I think I've always felt that way. And I think it may have actually come from my mother because she cut off her own career; she kind of projected all of that into me, with, you have to be successful, you have to do these things. So I was always encouraged to be a professional, and as I said, they were very upset when I decided to drop out of school and get married at a young age.

AR – Right. Let me turn now to some of your research. I assume, given what I know of your work, that research, among other things, has been a real central focus for you.

IF – That's very true.

AR – Across a number of areas, right?

IF – Yes, yes.

AR – Let me start with, and I'm picking rather arbitrarily, but let me start with your interest in violence and intimate partner violence. How did that research program get started up for you?

IF – I was teaching a psychology of women course in the seventies at the University of Pittsburgh, and I think around '75, one of my students came to me and started talking about this problem of violence.

AR – Okay.

IF - And at that point there was no literature and people didn't know anything about it, and I didn't know anything about it, but I thought, this sounds important; this sounds like something we really need to think about. And so again, following this kind of model I've had in my history of setting up a group of people, we got a group of people interested in that and started talking about it, and we actually applied for an NIMH grant to do some work on this area.

AR – Okay.

IF – And what we did, because again, this is the kind of model we used around our book, and you were asking well how did we write this book with no data, well we used the same model for our grants and things. We took theories and said, well if these theories work, then this is what you would predict should happen. For example, we used attribution theory and said, well if these are battered women, why would they stay; if they make these attributions that it's unstable and that it's going to change, which is what the kind of qualitative, we didn't have that label for it then, but that's what these women's experiences told us was happening, then that might explain why they're staying. So that was one of the theories we proposed to test.

AR – Okay.

IF – So we submitted that grant to NIMH and it was interesting because, originally, they weren't interested at all in it, and then it turned out that there'd been this new group on sexual violence that formed and they needed proposals. And so here was our proposal that got some kind of reasonable score but wasn't funded, and they said, 'Oh we could

take that and fund that in our program, but it's not dealing with sexual violence, so you've got to add marital rape to that.'

AR – Wow.

IF – Which was something that we didn't know anything about at that point.

AR – So they dictated to you what they sort of wanted to…

IF – Yeah, yeah, and we said fine, that sounds great, we'll add that, sure. So we got this money, very early, to do that research, and I then continued to do research in that area. That project took a long time and I didn't really know how to run a research project, so I kind of did this on my own. We developed an interview schedule and did this, but then the frustrating thing was that I couldn't publish this work.

AR – Oh.

IF – And the reason was that because, again, we were working independently and we developed our own measures of violence. But it turned out that we discovered that there was this sociologist, Murray Straus who had his own measure of violence, and he was seen as the expert, and everybody who reviewed any paper we ever did said, 'Well you didn't use the CTS, we can't publish this.' And we hadn't of course used that and so there were all his students and him who reviewed these things so we couldn't publish it.

AR – Okay.

IF – And there were a lot of other people complaining about it at the same time. There were some conferences in New Hampshire we went to, and there were some other people there at the same time who had the same complaint. And so there was a lot of hostility between Murray and the feminist community because of this. So my interest, kind of…I wrote a few book chapters, I got a few things out, published an article on marital rape, but I had to publish it in *Sex Roles* because none of the psychology journals were interested.

AR – Right.

IF – And of course it did get the right audience there because it was mostly humanities people. I'm sorry, not in *Sex Roles*, in *Signs*.

AR – Oh, okay.

IF – So I kind of let that research just sit after a while because I was frustrated and because I had to do other things, because I had to worry about tenure and things like that, and then I started hearing about this research on dating violence, which is a whole different body of people doing this research. And they started saying, 'There's women being violent, what's going on here?', and so I got interested in that again and said, well I don't believe that, and so I started collecting data on dating violence, and that then led to

a re-revival of that work for me. We're now doing a lot of work trying to understand female violence and how that fits into the larger picture of violence against women.

AR – Right. You said you went into it thinking, oh that's not right; women aren't the perpetrators here. How have you kind of dealt with some of the findings that show…

IF – We're talking about the dating violence?

AR – Yeah, yeah.

IF – Well, what we've discovered is that it depends on how you define violence. And I'm actually thinking of doing this in my presidential address, talking about this issue of defining violence and how that's affected that whole body of research, because it does have policy implications. So it turns out, if we look at violence as measured by the conflict tactics which everybody uses now, any act of physical aggression is considered violence. So if you're laughing at somebody and shove them, that's violence and you are labeled as violent.

AR – Wow.

IF – And that's in fact what the large majority of violence "is". It's those kind of very low level acts that nobody takes very seriously.

AR – And the scale itself doesn't allow you to tap into them, the context or the situation, i.e. slapping someone in a context of a humorous exchange is very different than in anger.

IF – Yeah, yeah, and that's true. Well there's other problems with CTS too, and I'm not sure how much you want to get into them, but it also asks about disagreements.

AR – Okay.

IF – But part of the issue is that this label of violence is being used in, I think, very inappropriate ways. And the people themselves don't define it as violence.

AR – Yeah, yeah.

IF – And many of them don't define themselves as victims in any sense.

AR – Wow.

IF – But it all gets labeled. And part of the problem is these measures are so heavily skewed that you can't use a kind of nuanced measure and look at levels of these things because there's just simply not enough data. So you typically end up dichotomizing so that any act of violence, any act of physical aggression of any sort, is labeled as violence.

AR – Okay.

IF – So it's really distorting the research.

AR – Has qualitative research shed any light on this?

IF – It's beginning to and I think that's one of the things that needs to be done.

AR – Definitely. I mean, that sounds like that's problematic when the research participants themselves aren't seeing things the same way the researchers are.

IF – Right.

AR – Well tell me, there's also, I mean you have a number of areas of research, but it's clear in your publications that work and gender has been a focus too.

IF – Right.

AR – Tell me a little bit about that research program.

IF – So in graduate school I worked with Bernie Weiner in achievement areas; I started with that long term interest in achievement. And of course one of the questions in that field, one of the early questions I had was, what about male/female differences (we didn't have the term gender in those days). And I started doing some research on that; looking at differences in attributional patterns between men and women. And so I started working on that and then that led to an interest in things like career planning, which I actually was interested in fairly early; we had some early papers on that.

AR – Yeah.

IF – Part of that has been a big longitudinal study of APA graduates that we have been following now for about thirty years.

AR- Oh wow.

IF – So we've got a big database there. But that then led to some of my interest in cross-cultural research.

AR – How so? How did that transition?

IF – So, it's kind of a long and complicated story, but I got involved in Semester at Sea, which is a university program that involves sailing around the world and teaching courses.

AR – Yeah. Is this something unique to the University of Pittsburgh?

IF – Yeah, University of Pittsburgh administered that.

AR – Okay, because I met somebody else from Pittsburgh and he talked about this, an unrelated project, but he talked about being a person involved with Semester at Sea, and I'm like, Pittsburgh seems…but yeah, so?

IF – So the University of Pittsburgh administered this program and so the faculty there had a priority in terms of going on ship. So I got to go on ship and that really was kind of life-changing in terms of getting interested in cross-cultural things.

AR – Oh neat.

IF – And I got interested…we also had a visitor from Croatia, so it's complicated and I don't need to get into all the details, but as a result of that experience and getting to know these people from what was then Yugoslavia, I decided to apply for a Fulbright and go there and do some research. And that was at the time when the country was splitting apart, and I thought, wow, this would be interesting. And it was also the time of the transition away from communism.

AR – Oh wow.

IF – And so I thought, oh wow, here's a wonderful natural experiment going on and what's going to happen to these people as their whole political and economic system changes; how is that going to change their basic views of work and family issues? So we started collecting data in '91 and I got the Fulbright and went over and made contacts with several other countries in Europe, and it just kind of grew and it's still evolving and going on now. So it's like a whole other area of research, one that still requires that I go over there and talk to people and keep it going.

AR – Wow. Well, because you're a feminist and because you do research on work and family life, can you tell me a little bit about how you personally balance your professional and personal lives? Has that been a challenge? Do you have any strategies that you've used?

IF – Well I know other people say the same thing, but I had a very supportive spouse. So I got that divorce early on, very shortly after I finished my PhD, and at that point I was already now in my thirties, and I'm thinking I would like to have kids, but I didn't have a husband at that point, so I kind of seriously started looking for a husband. And I found one who fortunately turned out to be very very family-oriented, very family-centered, and we then had two boys. And he was very very actively involved in raising them, so that helped a lot.

AR – Yeah. That's great. Did you ever feel any conflict about that or was that something that just…

IF – Oh yeah, he used to be upset because I was too work-oriented. I think I was probably more work-oriented than he was. And so he would insist, for example, when

we go on vacation you can't work, you can't do that! Or in the evenings, you have to stop working because we're going to do family things. We did spend a lot of time with the family so that was good.

AR – Yeah. Well, you've already mentioned the development of your international contacts, but I know as well that you've been involved in Division 52.

IF – Yes.

AR – So let me ask you a rather broad question. A lot of people have been talking about psychology becoming more international and more aware of international issues, and even in SPSSI we hear this a lot.

IF – Oh yeah.

AR – What is your take on that?

IF – Well I think we absolutely have to do that. I think we have to reach out to the world. As long as we are only focused on North America, or Canada and the U.S basically, we're very limited.

AR – In what ways do you see that enriching North American psychology?

IF – Well I see it enriching in the same way in many ways as bringing in women's studies, because the theories that were developed for males often didn't apply to women, and it forced us to re-question and re-look at those theories to better understand these issues. And I think that will happen as we become more international.

AR – Yeah, yeah, okay. Well let me ask you about, again, thinking about the 75th anniversary projects, where would you like to see SPSSI in the next ten, twenty, years? Where would you like to see SPSSI moving or what changes would you like to see happening over the next few decades of SPSSI's future?

IF – Good question. One thing I would like to see is for us, again, to reach out and bring more people into active engagement with SPSSI, especially young people and diverse people. But I think we should be more international too and I think some of the efforts that we're making there, about the international conferences and things like that, will help with that. I've certainly made an effort as a journal editor to do that, to bring in reviewers, and as much as we could, papers, and so on, from other countries. We had a special issue on Ireland, and one on Israel, so we've been reaching out and I think we need to continue to do that.

AR – Yeah, yeah. That reminds me, journal editing; you've done a lot of work on journals.

IF – Yes.

AR – What have been the highlights and/or the lowlights of that part of your career?

IF – Well I love it, I love editing. So I was an associate editor, well, I've done the issues of *Journal of Social Issues* and I've done special issues for many other journals as well. So I've done a lot of that and I really like doing that kind of thing; pulling together a bunch of articles. It's one of the few ways you can publish theory in journals as well, through special issues.

AR – Yeah.

IF – And so often when I've had, like this issue on defining violence, I'm thinking about what's the best way of doing that. But I may want to do a special issue on that topic, but I don't know what journal yet I'm thinking about this for. So I see that as a wonderful publishing opportunity, to get more of the review papers and the theory out. I did *Violence and Victims* for a while, was the associate editor of that, and then *Journal of Social Issues*, and I now may well become another major journal editor, so I'm negotiating that contract right now.

AR – Oh wow.

IF – Because I love it, I love editing, and I've really missed having to step down from *Journal of Social Issues*.

AR – Sure. Well there's a new journal that SPSSI, we heard about, or at least I heard about, the policy and review journal.

IF – Yeah. So we have editors in place for those new journals.

AR – Yeah, well that strikes me as an exciting development for SPSSI.

IF – Yes, I think so.

AR – Is there anything that I haven't asked you about, I'm sure there's lots I haven't asked you about, but anything I haven't asked you about that you would like to put on record at this point?

IF – I can't think of anything. I think you've done a nice job.

AR – Well we've jumped around a little bit. Let me just review my questions that I wrote down to make sure that I covered everything I wanted to cover. Okay, I think I covered most things that I wanted to talk about. Let me just ask you though, one last thing. We talked about the future of SPSSI, what about the future of feminism and feminist psychology. Any thoughts on that?

IF – That's the problem again because it's been so pushed out of mainstream psychology. And as I say that, it's not completely true because there have been these women that have been, kind of, accepted into the mainstream. And it's interesting and I don't know, Kay Deaux for example, is one of these people. She is recognized as one of the gender experts within social psychology. Now how she got to that role, I'm not sure. It's interesting because the large majority, and if you look at the large majority of feminist psychologists, they're not in mainstream departments. There's actually very very few of us in regular university graduate school kinds of occupations. And even many of us in those kinds of roles…like I have been really marginalized in my own department. I've been pushed out of social psychology for example.

AR – Really?

IF – Yeah. And I'm not the only one who's had this happen to.

AR – Nancy Russo talks about that. She said that psychology wouldn't have anything to do with her for a long time.

IF – Yeah.

AR- They were surprised when she gave up the women's studies and she came back to psychology.

IF – So there are very few women who have been able to do that. And it would be interesting to find out what they've done that's been successful because most of us don't understand, because there's just so much hostility among the men.

AR – Yeah, yeah.

IF – And I told you what happened. I never would have gotten promoted to full professor if this one guy who's been hostile throughout my career hadn't gotten promoted at the same time that I did. Because if he'd been one of the senior people, he would have blocked me; he's done that to other people.

AR – Wow.

IF – Blocked them from being promoted. So these men get into these power positions….we had a conference about this and they were described as the dinosaurs, and so somebody was saying, well how would you deal with the dinosaurs? And somebody said you just have to let them die off. And that may be the answer but I'm not sure that it's going to be that much better when that generation dies, because I think we're raising young dinosaurs that are thinking the same.

AR – I think maybe too. And there aren't as many young women who are perhaps…I don't know. I speak to colleagues of mine, and my department has certainly…we have Sandra Pyke who has been active in 35 and the Canadian scene. We've got Esther

Greenglass who was an amazing active feminist, especially in the seventies. Now you wouldn't necessarily pick her out of the department and say she's a feminist because that's not what she's doing now, but she was in the early days. But other than that, there's no one, and we have a sixty member faculty.

IF – Wow. That's distressing.

AR – There's no place for young feminists to go to. So I have become the kind of feminist even though it hasn't been my primary research program, but there's no one. And the people who are my age, who were hired, women, they don't identify as feminists. And so when the old male dinosaurs die off, there's not going to be necessarily younger feminists to be able to come and do their thing.

IF – I know. I think that's right. That's kind of scary.

AR – Yeah, yeah. Tell me a little bit about how you mentor, because I know you've done a lot of mentoring. I mean, you've obviously published a lot with students.

IF – And that's one of the ways I mentor.

AR – Yeah.

IF – Is to encourage them to do research and get them involved in research projects, and try and be as supportive as I can. Whenever I work with somebody I try and figure out what they're good at and encourage them to do that thing. So some of them want to do data, and so I say, okay, you do the data and I'll write this part. Some of them are really great on theory, but not so great on the data, and so I say, okay I'll do the data, you do the theory part. So I try to get them to bring in whatever skills they have and do that. And try to get them involved in book chapters, and whatever kinds of projects I can.

AR – How did you learn how to do that?

IF – I don't know. I guess, well I have to say, actually Bernie was very good at that, even though he was quite sexist in his attitudes, he was good at finding people's skills and encouraging them to do that. So I guess that was one of my early role models in graduate school.

AR – I find that challenging as a person just starting to really build a research group and work with graduate students. I'm still trying to figure out how to really get students involved more quickly than I have been doing in the past.

IF – I think that's very hard, and one of the things, I just have a new graduate student starting right now, and I just had a conversation with her, and we really had to grapple with what was a good area for her to get into. I find a lot of, and especially the women these days, don't have very strong interests; that they're willing to do a lot of things.

AR – Yeah. That's kind of the model now to get accepted into graduate school. You have to be willing to say you'll almost do anything to be able to get in.

IF – Right.

AR – So you don't develop your own program because if somebody doesn't like it they won't accept you.

IF – Exactly. That's what happened to my son by the way. He had a very strong research area and didn't get admitted to graduate school, I think for exactly that reason. And so to find something that they can get interested in, I really have to, we just have to sit and talk for a while, and I try to see if there's anything that lights a spark as we're talking. And my interests are so broad I think, and at this point, I'm at the luxury; I don't have to worry about what I do. I can do whatever seems fun, so that's a wonderful freedom to have. And so, you know, I've given up on raises a long time ago and just figure that I'll do my thing and enjoy it and so that's what I do.

AR – Yeah.

IF – And so I can brainstorm with them and there's almost always something we can find that we both have some interest in, so I say, okay, let's go with that. So I have to be very open. This idea that people have, this fantasy that students are going to come and do your research for you, I've never had that happen. So the only way I'm able to successfully work with these students is to find out what they're interested in and go with that.

AR – But that also demands a lot of you.

IF – Oh well yeah, but it makes it fun. They come in with these new ideas and I've thought about these things before, and my ideas have already been tried and so now they have these new ideas, and so it's great. So that's what keeps things interesting and moving.

AR – Okay. Well why don't we stop there.