Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Louise Kidder

Interviewed by Alexandra Rutherford
Philadelphia, PA
October 26th, 2007

When citing this interview, please use the following citation:

Kidder, L. (2007, Oct. 26). Interview by A. Rutherford. Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History and Online Archive Project. Philadelphia, PA.

For permission to use this interview in published work, please contact:

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

Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Louise Kidder

Interviewed by Alexandra Rutherford
Philadelphia, PA
October 26th, 2007

AR: Alexandra Rutherford, Interviewer
LK: Louise Kidder, Interview Participant

AR – If we could get your place and date of birth so that we have it on the tape.

LK – Louise Kidder, Louise [Hough] Kidder, and I was born in Queens, New York, in 1942, December 4th.

AR – Well let's get started in a really general kind of way, and I'll just throw this out. Can you describe for me how it was that you came into psychology to begin with?

LK – Actually that starts with my father, who with the GI Bill was able to go to Columbia to get his PhD. He got it in psychology, I never asked him why he chose psychology, I should. But he loved what he did and he got his degree in clinical psychology from Teachers College. And when I went to college, I knew from the first day that I wanted to study psychology. I think I hadn't considered much of anything else.

AR – Wow, wow. So it was knowledge of his career and satisfaction with it that turned you on?

LK – Right.

AR – And so you went to Oberlin for your undergrad. Can you tell me about your experiences at Oberlin?

LK – Oh my experiences at Oberlin, wow, where do I begin? Well they had a very good psych department and so I guess I was never turned off from my initial intention to major in psychology. And in my senior year, I was the first person in a program they had just started called Senior Scholar, where I didn't have to go to any classes, I could do whatever I wanted. And my first semester I chose a project that really fell within experimental psychology, even though I didn't intend it to be in experimental psychology. I was interested in this philosophical issue of how when we get really used to seeing something over and over and over again, we no longer see it; it disappears in some way. Really issues of adaptation. I was interested in it at a very theoretical, broad level, but it got translated into a study of stabilized retinal images.

AR – Wow.

LK – And when I did that research I used to feel really uncomfortable as I was taking the 'subjects' up into this darkened laboratory room, and asking them to fixate on an image and tell me when the image disappeared or broke up. And I finally decided at the end of that semester that that wasn't what I wanted to do, because I was taking this interesting person into a laboratory and then narrowing the focus down to nothing practically. So it was an analog of what I was interested in, but it wasn't the way I wanted to do my research. Then the second semester I started to do something that was really more about linguistics and the [Wharfs appear] **[3:27]** hypothesis, and how the words that we use shape what we see. So I've always been interested in phenomenology.

[3:36]

AR – Yeah, yeah.

LK – And that last year at Oberlin, Bob and I got married. We met the very first week of freshmen year, got married the first week of senior year, and decided we wanted to do something like the Peace Corps; this was 1964. So Oberlin had a program that was very similar to the Peace Corps and we applied to that and went to India for two years.

AR – Yeah, I noticed that on your CV. So tell me what that, it looks like you were there for a couple of years in India.

LK – Two years.

AR – So tell me about that. What was that like? What did you do?

LK – I think I benefited more than the students I was teaching, which may always be true. So we taught English, it was considered remedial English, to beginning university students and to colleges that were like mission started colleges. One was called American College and the other [Lady Dought] College **[4:44]**. But we were really there because we wanted to experience India and learn about another way of life and another philosophy; did a lot of travelling.

AR – What made you choose India? Or what piqued your interest in India per say?

LK – Because the program was an exchange, there were always Indian faculty members coming to Oberlin, and actually again from freshmen year, I got to know some of them. And I think I was interested in Hindu philosophy and vegetarianism, from way back then. And when we applied to the Peace Corps and then had a choice of Peace Corps or the Oberlin program, we chose the Oberlin program because we already knew people; the same faculty members who came to Oberlin went back to those colleges. So we had a connection.

AR – And so how did you find it? I mean obviously you did the teaching, but then you also travelled. Did it meet your expectations, did it change your expectations?

LK – Oh it was fabulous. In fact when I think about whether I would want to live far away again in another culture, having lived in India and having lived in Japan, I would choose India.

AR – Why?

LK – Because it's a very open, very welcoming culture. We would take train trips and by the end of the trip, you know a 48-hour train trip from the south to the north, by the end of the trip someone on the train had invited us to come and stay at his house for a week.

[6:27]

AR – Wow.

LK – And they invited us partly because it would be entertainment for their family, but also because they just were really genuinely open, interested in us, interested in teaching us about India. Proud of their culture, but not in an arrogant way; just wanting to share it.

AR – Neat. So when you returned, what was the next step?

LK – I had already applied to graduate school even before going to India, so I guess what I did was ask the different graduate schools if I could take a rain check and they said yes.

AR – Okay. So you knew even though during your undergrad you had been a little bit put off by the kind of reductionism that you saw, you still wanted to pursue psychology.

LK – Right. And I still was really interested in issues of theory and philosophy. So when I applied to graduate programs, I didn't apply in social. I applied in experimental, thinking that that would be the area where there would be programs in theory.

AR – Okay.

LK – But again it turned out that they weren't really about theory. They were more about laboratories. So when I went to Northwestern in experimental and started to do my first year of research, I again got turned off by the narrow focus. But [Don Campbell] was there and he taught the most exciting course that I took, so when I said to him that I would like to switch into social, it was very easy.

AR – Oh good. And what was the course?

LK – He just welcomed us. It was his introduction to social psychology, but he really had another subtitle called phenomenological behaviourism.

AR – Wow.

LK – And again, it was very philosophical and theoretical, and it was about translating between what seemed like opposing camps. So he was probably the most exciting thinker in my whole study career, undergraduate/graduate.

AR – Oh wow. And did he then become your PhD supervisor?

LK – No he was on my committee. But my supervisor was [Phil Brickman], who was a new faculty member at the time, and also a really wonderful mind.

AR – Yeah. Well tell me about your dissertation research and what direction that went in. **[9:15]**

LK – Okay. Each one of these things that I tell you tells you about how I started in one direction and ended up in a very different place. When I first wrote my proposal for studying in India, I was going to do something on [Ayurvedic] **[9:35]** medicine. I don't know if you know this work by [Michael Balint]

AR – I don't.

LK – Called the doctor, the patient, and the illness, which looks at how doctors and patients negotiate what the truth is about how someone is feeling and what the illness is, and what the solution is. And again it's this very phenomenological social construction of reality approach. And I read that book and was fascinated by that process and I thought I wanted to look at Ayurvedic medicine. Knowing nothing about medicine, nothing about Ayurveda, no Sanskrit, etcetera, but I was going to study Ayurvedic medicine practioners and somehow look at that negotiation of reality. And once I got there, I think I already had this back up plan which was to study the acculturation of Westerners in India. And again, I was interested in how one person's perceptions could change or influence another person's perceptions. So once I got there and realized that I couldn't do this study of Ayurvedic medicine and practioners, I began interviewing expatriates, Westerners. And I was interested in how they and their closest Indian friends influenced each others perceptions of the world.

AR – Okay.

LK – And one of the first things I discovered, because that's what had happened to me when I went to India the first time: I learned to see India through Indian eyes to some extent. Indians helped me reinterpret what was going on.

AR – Right.

LK - So I started interviewing Westerners and one of the important questions at the end of the interview was could you tell me the name of your closest Indian friend because I would also like to interview them if possible. And I began to discover that they didn't have a closest Indian friend as we did in India. They didn't have a close colleague. They had a cook or a driver or a gardener, and that was the person that they knew the best. They really didn't have peers, except for a few. And when they did name an Indian peer, it often turned out to be the same Indian, that is, the person who was part of this expatriate circle. Usually someone who had also lived in the States or in the UK. So I continued with that project but I gave up on the hypothesis that they affected each others perceptions, and then it really became a study of colonialism and neo-colonialism.

AR – Okay.

LK – And what happens when people go from a very middle class life and are suddenly elevated in status by living in a, well at that time what we called a third world country. So I reinterpreted all of my data.

[13:05]

AR – Right. Now tell me about doing that kind of study, at the time that you did, that is an interview based interpretive, I assume, sort of study, when we think about psychology, certainly social psychology too, as being more laboratory based and quantitative. How was that for you, to be doing this different kind of study at Northwestern at the time?

LK – Well I did two studies in one, so I had questionnaires and I had attitude scales, and I was able to quantify a whole bunch of things; attitude measures and measures of knowledge of Indian culture. And I measured how long they had been there, I didn't measure their incomes, but I had a lot of variables that I was able to quantify and I played with the analysis of those. I measured how people's attitudes changed as a function of the number of months they had been there; I called that absolute time. And also a function of their proportional lapsed time. So I had linear and curvilinear analyses. But then I had this other part which was the very open ended interview, and my own participant observation, field notes.

AR – Okay.

LK – And I brought those two together. So I had the safe side, the quantitative where I did statistical tests, and then I had the other really open and interpretive side. And the members of my committee included Don Campbell and Phil Brickman, who did quantitative work, and also [Howard Becker], the sociologist, with whom I had taken a course in field work.

AR – Okay.

LK – So they were very generous to me.

AR – And did Howard's training in qualitative methods, or field work I guess, did that help with the analysis of the more open ended material?

LK – Oh yeah, and I actually analyzed and reanalyzed that, later, when it became clearer to me, long after my dissertation was done, what that was about.

AR – Oh wow. [Jeanne] mentioned that you had done some of this very recently in fact.

LK – Yeah, it was around 2000. It's an analysis that doesn't contradict anything in the original work, or dissertation, but it took it a step further. And I did that after reading [Rosaldo's] work, I'm blocking on his first name now, but Michelle Rosaldo was an anthropologist and her husband was an anthropologist. She's no longer living, but he wrote a fascinating book with some essays in it that reflected on how he was able to reinterpret some of his data. He did work among head hunters, as they were called, and after his wife's death, through a really kind of freak accident, she fell off a cliff is the way it's told, he was able to go back to his data on head hunters and he wrote this beautiful essay called "Grief and the head hunter's rage," in which he

reanalyzed his early dissertation data, which he had tried to set up as a study of exchange and sort of trying to right the balance. You know, if the members of one group killed the members of another then they have to get back to sort of right the balance. It was a whole equity analysis.

[17:22]

AR – Okay.

LK – And it was a very rational analysis and he never fully grasped that there could be really deep rage there too until after his wife died and he discovered some of his own rage.

AR – So when you decided to reanalyze your data, what did you find?

LK – Now I have to go back and recollect that.

AR – Well I mean the best you can, the broad outlines, the things that stood out.

[Participant asks for recorder to be turned off]

LK – When I did the dissertation analysis it was kind of like this very rational analysis of how foreigners become part of a third culture; they leave their culture, they don't really become part of the culture they enter. It's a third culture in between, and that wasn't my concept, other people had written about that. But it was not an impassioned analysis. And only later, probably after I got tenure, did I feel freer to engage in a more impassioned and political analysis of what I had at that time called neo-colonialism; how really well-intentioned people can end up in positions that they didn't necessarily ask for, but they also don't deny those positions and privilege. So one of the reanalyses I did was about whiteness and privilege.

AR – Okay.

LK – And the other one that I did for this book that [Sarah Dickey] published from [Bowden and Brunswick-Maine] **[19:20]** was about, I was probably inspired by Audrey Lorde's title about the pastor's tools, and I looked at the mutual interdependence of servants and their masters, the [sahib or mem sahib] in India. Now I think that things have changed so much in India now, that Westerners who go there really probably do have peers who are not only as wealthy as they are, but much wealthier. And they don't have to be families of Maharajahs.

AR – Yeah.

LK – They are also very often themselves returnees to India, particularly in Bangalore, the city I lived in at that time. But I looked at this entangled relationship between masters and servants and I asked who is living in whose house. I mean the servants had all the expertise and the masters had all the money, but they were totally dependent on servants because they didn't know how to negotiate in the Indian marketplace for instance.

AR – Neat. Well tell me, after you finished your dissertation work and you did both this sort of qualitative, interpretative, and quantitative piece, what happened next for you? I mean obviously you wound up at Temple. So tell me how that transpired, how you ended up there?

LK – How I ended up there? You want the true story?

[21:12]

AR – Sure, definitely the true story.

LK – Let's see. I was lucky all through graduate school; I had fellowships. It started out with a Woodrow Wilson fellowship, and that was really how I got to choose which school I wanted to go to because any school that I applied to would take me since I brought my own money.

AR – Yeah.

LK – Then I had an NIH pre-doc, and then again in my last year I had another Woodrow Wilson dissertation fellowship. And part of what I think happens is that you get on a roll, and so I also then got a post-doc fellowship from NSF, which meant that I didn't have to get a job my first year out. I wanted one, but since there were two of us looking for jobs, I actually said to Bob why don't you choose where we go if you get a job offer and I'll take the post-doc. So we pretty much decided to come to Philadelphia because Bob got an offer here. There were no jobs advertised at Temple, but Don Campbell wrote what he called a shot in the dark letter to Temple, and it was such a strong letter that the department chair said well, let's interview her.

AR – Wow, that's great.

LK – And at that time we had a six month old baby, so Bob and I agreed that when we came for the interview, I would never be seen holding the baby, even though I was nursing him. And we brought him to the interviews and Bob held him the whole time.

AR – Wow.

LK - And that was because I was afraid, actually from some previous job interviews, that if I appeared pregnant at the job interview they didn't take me seriously. This one dean at Trinity College said to me, as I sat there, he said, 'Mrs Kidder, have you considered the fact that you're about to become a mother?' And I wanted to say, 'Oh, I wondered what that was all about!'

AR – Wow, yeah.

LK - So, you know, I was just very wary about being seen as a mother. And I also got an interview at Penn because Don Campbell wrote these shot in the dark letters to several places. And at Penn they were looking for someone, it wasn't a tenure track job I don't think, I don't remember for sure now, but in the [Anninburgh] **[23:53]** school to teach research methods. So they actually made me an offer for that and when I got back to Temple and said Penn has made me this offer, then it's like a dating game; all of a sudden I was a hotter property to Temple. Originally Temple had said well why don't you take your post-doc and we'll keep in touch. But

then when they heard I had a job offer from Penn, then they made me an offer. And I decided to take that, so that I wouldn't take the post-doc and then go through another whole round of job searching.

AR – Right.

[24:30]

LK – And that's how I ended up in Philadelphia. I did turn down a couple of job interviews, not jobs, but interviews, and one of them was where [Clara Mayo] was teaching, which I think was Boston University. And I called and said that I wasn't going to come for the interview because there was nothing available for my husband. And she gave me a lecture on the phone that I was really grateful for.

AR – Oh, what was it?

LK – You know it was a gentle lecture, really a feminist teaching: you shouldn't turn down an interview opportunity just because there's nothing for your husband, listen to me. But I still turned it down, the opportunity, to go for an interview. But I was grateful, and I hadn't ever met her before that, I met her after that.

AR – Interesting. Well tell me a little bit then about where you were at at that point in terms of identifying or not as a feminist. Was it something that was on your mind, were you involved at that point?

LK – Oh yeah, it was very much on my mind. And probably I didn't want to go for some job interviews because it was just a scary thing to do. But I had been part of what we called a conscious raising group, a CR group, in graduate school, and it was very clear to me that I wanted to have a job. My mother used to say to me well of course when you have children you'll take some time off, won't you? And I said no. So I was an ardent feminist, even though I turned down the opportunity to interview in Boston. And I fought a lot. So at home, Bob and I negotiated all the time who was going to cook dinner what nights, so I was always fighting for equal rights at home. I fought with people in my division, in social psychology, to not be perceived as the help maid.

AR – How was it being a parent and being a professional, and being a mother and being a professional, how did that all work out? How did you make it work I guess?

LK – How did I make it work, well, I think we made it work because Bob was also very committed to my having an equal career. So it might sound paradoxical or contradictory if I say that I didn't go on one job interview because he didn't have an opportunity, but I think – it'd be interesting for you to interview him too – I think we really did work it out together. A lot of it was my insistence and then his willingness to do everything fifty fifty; childcare, cooking.

AR – Where did that sense of egalitarianism in your relationship come from, do you think, for you? Like the sense that it had to be fifty fifty, where did that come from in you?

LK – Where did it come from…

AR – I mean was it something you had observed?

[28:30]

LK – No it wasn't what I observed at home because my mother stayed home when I was young. Part of it I guess was the realization that I wasn't going to get the jobs that I wanted if I didn't have equal time to devote to my career.

AR – Okay.

LK – And it came from the consciousness raising groups and just from an absolute determination to have a career. I knew that if I started out part-time it would never work. Somehow I knew right from the start that in fact that line that Temple said to me, well why don't you use your post-doc and then get in touch with us since you'll be in the area, that already spelled trouble. So I wasn't going to do that.

AR – Did you have any feminist mentors?

LK – You know the one person on my committee that I didn't mention was [Marilyn Brewer], and you could say that she was a feminist mentor because she was a very strong scholar, very smart, very determined. But she never talked about feminist issues with me. She was a few years ahead of me at Northwestern, and then she was on the faculty there for a year or so.

AR – Okay.

LK – And that's how she go to be on my committee. At Oberlin my advisor was a woman who was also, you know, we all regarded her as very smart, but she never talked about feminism or feminist issues. It was probably too early then. So I guess my feminist mentors became the people that I formed the study group with here, and that was Jeanne, Michelle, and then later [Demi] joined, she's a sociologist.

AR – Yeah, I met her just the other day. So how did the study group come about?

LK – We probably each have a different memory of how it happened, but I was part of a reading group even before that, that included people who were not psychologists. It started out as a friendship group and a pot luck group and a reading group, and that one fell apart. And I think part of the reason it fell apart was what one of my friends had said to me, because they were all friends of mine, I brought them together, and she said Louise you're going to get yourself in trouble doing this because if anything goes wrong between you and one member of the group, it's all going to fall apart, that is, as long as I was the one who was inviting people together. It was a more complex analysis than that, but it was so long ago that I can't remember all the details of it.

AR – Okay.

LK – So that did happen and I was still hungry for another study group, and probably Jeanne was part of that first group also; she overlapped with some of the other people in that. And when that group kind of fell apart, it was probably some years after that that Jeanne and I got together and said why don't we do something like that again. But then it was no longer just a group of friends that I called together. So Jeanne had friends and I had friends, and friends had friends, and so we reformed in a new way. And we actually gave each other reading assignments that were academic, usually articles that we would Xerox for each other.

[33:02]

AR – Was there a particular theme to it?

LK – You could say it was sort of a cross between sociology and psychology, so it was not social psychology in the traditional psych department sense, but it was a feminist reading group. So most of the articles we read were about gender issues, but also other political issues.

AR – Well tell me about, I'm putting on my hat as SPSSI historian now, when did you first hear about, get involved in, SPSSI?

LK – That was in graduate school, 1967. In fact, I gave all of my SPSSI, all of my collections of journals to the social psych grad students at Temple when I left last December. I was curious about when I started, and I looked back and the very first ones were in 1967.

AR – Wow.

LK – And I think it was, it might have been Phil Brickman who introduced SPSSI to the graduate students. And then he became the chair of the publications committee, so he was the one who asked me if I would be interested in revising the methods book.

AR – Right.

LK – And that was really early on in my career. And I think I just felt so flattered by it that I never thought that I was doing a great deed. I just thought wow, they really want me to do this? And it was a book that I had used as an undergraduate student, even as a graduate student.

AR – Oh yeah, neat, neat. Okay, but you actually worked then on revising, it was the [Seltzman, Rights, and Cook's] research methods in social relations. But it went through several editions.

LK – Several.

AR – So what was that process like in terms of working with SPSSI on it as a SPSSI published book, and that kind of thing.

LK – Well it was hard at first because I wanted to have a collaborator, and the collaborator I invited was a sociologist who was a friend of mine and Bob's, and he had a writing block; he had a real problem with writing that I didn't realize until about a year or so into the project. And finally someone at SPSSI, and I don't remember who, said why don't we just tell him that he can't do this anymore. Somehow I didn't feel I could do that.

AR – Yeah, yeah.

[36:04]

LK – So once he was relieved of that responsibility I got some other people to help with various chapters. But I did love writing, I still do love writing, even if I don't write fast or furiously. I love the act of putting words together and creating images. And when I was cleaning out my files I saw some review that someone who later became an editor of JPSP, he wrote a review of the, I guess it was the first edition that I did, and used some beautiful language to say that this was a beautifully written, portions of it, were beautifully written.

AR – That must have been very gratifying.

LK – It was very gratifying. I forgot all about that. I was cleaning out my files at work and came across that.

AR – And during the 80s you were, from your CV anyway, for at least seven years you were a council rep to APA council, it looks like from SPSSI, or were you SPSSI council?

LK – No I was a SPSSI council member.

AR – Any memories of the issues during that time and what your involvement was over that period in the 80s?

LK – That was also when I was going off to Japan, so it was a really, I had a lot of other things I was involved in.

AR – So there are no hot topics that just

LK – No.

AR – Well tell me about Japan then. First of all, what took you to Japan? What was it like?

LK – What took us there…It was a chance meeting on an elevator. Temple had just opened a campus in Japan and it was really an entrepreneurial act on Temple's part. And a friend of mine in the psych department was working in the provost office, and it was her responsibility to find faculty to teach there. And she was getting off the elevator and I was getting on at the end of the day, and she said, 'Louise, how would you and Bob like to go to Japan?' And I said when, and she said this June, and I think it was like March or April. It's funny, my first thought was, oh she must have asked me because she knew that I lived in India and might be interested in going far far away and living in a very different culture again. It turns out she didn't know, or it hadn't registered with her that I had lived in India, so I made up that reason. I think it really was just this chance, and they were probably looking for two faculty members to go, so if they could get one faculty member for two, or two for one, it would just involve moving one family.

AR – Right, right.

[39:20]

LK – So I came home with Bob, and we talked about it on the way home, and we had probably talked with our children about going to either Japan, Korea, or India. Maybe it was Korea or India, because our daughter was born in Korea. So it was not a foreign concept to them; they were ten and twelve at that time. And you know, we have pictures of India all around, Indian drums. So we said to them sit down, we just want to talk about something that's come up, how would you like to go to Japan? And they looked at us and each other, and the way I remember it they said when, and we said this June, and they said for how long, and we said one year, and they said yes.

AR – Wow, that's neat.

LK – They just said okay. So it was wonderful. In a way it was good that we didn't have a whole lot of time to worry about it, you know. It was just a matter of packing up and finding someone to live in our house, and I think we sent the kids to summer camp for four weeks so that we could pack up the house, and we went. And we had a few lessons in Japanese before going, that was part of the contract of what we could expect. So the lessons were set up for me and for Bob, and even there there are two different kinds of Japanese that men and women speak according to levels of politeness. After the first lesson we said to the instructor, or no, even at the first lesson we brought our kids; we thought we want them to learn a few words and phrases, and he looked taken aback by this. And we said what's the problem, and he explained that there's a different kind of Japanese for children than there is for adults

AR – Wow.

LK – It's not that there's a different method for teaching, it's really a different way of speaking, because adults are expected to speak much more formally. So it's different verbs, different nouns, different prefixes, different suffixes, and for me it would be even more polite than for a man, which of course made me want to rebel immediately! But anyway, we got there knowing a few phrases like where's the subway? That was important because that was the only way of travel. And on the first morning, after we slept in the house that we were taken to, our house, we realized there was no food in the house and there were no towels; there was everything else but no food and no towels. So I wanted to go out and get food and towels, we were all going to go out, and I thought how do we find our way back to this house? You know if we could drop bread crumbs

AR – Yeah.

LK – But we don't have breadcrumbs to drop! So it was learning by total immersion. It was great.

AR – Yeah. And what did you do while you were there?

LK – I taught, and I taught the same courses that I taught here, in English to Japanese students whose English was a struggle. But we managed.

[43:19]

AR – What were some of the similarities and differences in terms of Japanese students versus the students you were teaching at Temple?

LK – Well the Japanese students were not accustomed to asking questions or having class discussion, so that was a culture conflict. And they were also, I mean just as we would be if we didn't know the language well, really reluctant to speak up in class for fear of not knowing how to say it. But one of the most interesting things for me was that they were very willing, once they learned that in an American style classroom a lot of the interaction is discussion and question and answer and not just lecture, they were very interested in issues of race in the US. They knew a little bit about race relations here, but when I then said now let's find some analogs in Japan, some parallels, and I knew a little about the position of Koreans in Japan and the position of kind of an outcast Japanese group, all of a sudden the room went silent. Nobody wanted to discuss that. And one reason was that it's always easier to talk about someone else's problems than your own, but the other was that they weren't sure who in the room might be Korean, Japanese Korean, or who might be a member of that outcast group.

AR – Wow.

LK – So it was kind of an invisible set of categories, but very powerful categories.

AR – What impact would you say, having spent that time in Japan and I suppose too the time in India, has had on your work as a psychologist?

LK – It made me much more aware of culture. And I guess it makes me question a lot of social psych theory, a lot of the experiments which made it seem as though this is the way people are all around the world. Without thinking of our culture being a major interacting variable. Sort of culture is invisible in so much of social psych research and theory.

AR – And how has that sort of acknowledgement of that, how has that affected your ability to relate to more mainstream American social psychology? How did that play out even in terms of being a social psychologist and interacting with your colleagues who may or may not share that same perspective on the importance of culture and non-universalizing

[Participant asks for tape to be turned off]

LK – My impression of what happens is that when I would start to talk, and whether it was on a feminist issue or a culture issue, that I would be pigeon holed as either that's Louise, or oh that's sort of predictable because she's always talking about India and Japan.

AR – Right.

LK - So instead of having other people see it as yeah, that's an important dimension, they would put it over here, or put me over here, which actually didn't bother me that much because I was also proud of having been able to live in other places and survive.

AR – Yeah.

[47:35]

LK – And love it and learn from it. So I don't know whether it's my own arrogance, or just my own, alright, you can only fight so much, that let me accept the fact that when I would speak from those positions – now this probably happens to a lot of people, they start to speak and you think you know what they're going to say. But I think when I would bring up issues of culture, I also thought maybe sometimes people were defensive since they didn't have the same kind of cultural perspective and experience; they didn't want to go there. But sometimes, if it was like on a student's dissertation committee, if I was asked to be on that committee I was asked to be there for those reasons; either for qualitative or cultural expertise. And people would listen, they would acknowledge it, and I felt they would learn from it.

AR – Can you speak to any of the reasons why you think psychology as a discipline has been, compared to other disciplines, I won't name them, but has been a little bit more resistant to the notion? Truly incorporating the notion of the importance of context, of culture, of a more interpretive framework, a less universalizing framework? Do you have any perspective on that?

LK – It's going to sound like a clinical analysis of psychologists. I think if I compare the people I know in psychology and sociology, it's almost as though, I guess I was going to say that most of my best friends were in sociology and anthropology.

AR – Yeah.

LK – It's almost as though some people go into psychology because they're sort of curious about themselves but they're also scared of it, and it's almost as though they have no bodies. One of the colleagues with whom I had the most difficult times, I thought of him as a person who always wore grey flannel, and there was nothing beneath the grey flannel; nothing that he was in touch with. So I think some psychologists really are afraid to be really open and vulnerable, and I think qualitative work for one demands, or gives you the opportunity to be really open and vulnerable. When you immerse yourself, whether it's a street corner, whether it's another culture – I think of all of these as other cultures – I think some psychologists would rather wear the lab coat and the rubber gloves because they're afraid.

AR – Sort of a reluctance to really engage with the thing that they're studying, which is life, other human beings, groups, that kind of thing, cultures.

LK – Yes. I mean maybe that's what draws people into academic psychology, kind of a safe distance from that. So you're studying this in them, but not in yourself, not experiencing it in yourself.

AR – Yeah. This is unrelated, but something I wanted to make sure to ask you about. You were part of a group called International Feminists of Japan.

LK – Oh yeah.

AR – What was that group about?

[51:40]

LK – I got to know a Japanese woman, I'm trying to think of how I got to know her. She had lived in the States for a few years and married a Japanese American, but then ultimately she wanted to go back to Japan and Japan wasn't his home, so they separated and she went back. And somehow, someone put us in touch with each other, and I remember writing, probably in just an essay that I wrote for myself and for friends, that she and I planned to meet at a certain train station. And you know, some train stations have two million people go through them a day.

AR – Wow.

LK – And I'm thinking how am I going to find her in this train station. She can probably find me, I'll stick out in the crowd, but how am I going to know which person she is. And then, when we met, I knew immediately. I mean she stuck out as much as I did because of having lived here. That's another one of the things that I've written about, how Japanese returnees stand out, visibly, audibly, and behaviourally. So she, I guess because she had lived here and she had enjoyed some of what she and I think of as freedoms, freedoms of expression here, so you don't have to be so tight and so polite, and so carefully packaged, we wanted to do some things together. And she invited me to join her with a group that were setting up the Tokyo Rape Crisis Centre. So that's what that group was also connected with.

AR – Okay. And did you meet then other Japanese feminists?

LK – I did. Most of them I couldn't speak with; their English wasn't good enough and my Japanese wasn't good enough. There is a Japanese scholar who I met who I think did her PhD at Yale, or did some work at Yale, who might also have been part of that group. But I think I met her the second time that I went, instead of the first, and this person I met the first time.

AR – Okay. Well tell me about, as you say, having worked as a consultant at the Rape Crisis Centre in Tokyo, can you talk about rape and sexual violence in Japan, and the context for that. Again, I suppose with reference to the American experience because that's what we're familiar with.

LK – Yeah. Wow, that was so long ago I have to try to recollect it.

AR – Yeah, this was 80s, so more than twenty years ago.

LK – You know we've learned to say that there's many different forms that rape takes, and the kind of rape that they were dealing with at the Tokyo Rape Crisis Centre, I think for the most part, was not what we would call violent stranger rape. But it was cases of what we would call workplace or acquaintance or date rape, where women just didn't want to participate in sex but felt that if they didn't, they would lose their jobs, their boyfriends. And some of it was also men coming home drunk from hours of obligatory drinking and carousing after work, and demanding sex, and wives not knowing what their rights were or how to handle that kind of a situation. So

in many ways it was an educational effort rather than the kind of rape crisis centre you find here, where you're taking women to the hospital.

[56:00]

AR – Right.

LK – And even at Temple University Japan, there were, I'll tell you this, this probably shouldn't go into any archives. The Japanese president of the university, the first year that we were there, he was demanding sex from the women who were the secretaries. One woman finally left and the next woman who was in line for that job was thinking what am I going to do, I need a job, I want this job. And all the staff knew about it and no one was enforcing Temple's sexual harassment policy because it was, quote, a cultural issue.

AR – Oh wow.

LK – Finally the American deans there, and others, started to really publicize Temple University's sexual harassment policy and push it, and not say this is a cultural issue.

AR – Oh gosh. We were speaking with some folks from Japan who came in for this gender, war, and militarism conference.

LK – How was that?

AR – Oh it's been very interesting. I just caught the last two sessions last night but Jeanne's there today. But the one woman was from Okinawa, and she's head of a rape crisis centre in Okinawa were they deal with a lot of Americans coming off the military base and wreaking havoc.

LK – Yeah.

AR – But she said that the most recent case that they're working on is a very well-liked and well-esteemed Japanese professor who has been accused of raping one of his students. Her story is she felt she had to submit in order to get her degree. And he's saying well she's submitted for a year and this is a relationship, not rape. Anyway, that's interesting. It's not something before this trip that I've had a chance to learn this much about. Well let me ask you a little bit about some of your, and I don't know how much memory or information you'll recall about these things either, but this was in the early 80s when you were involved in a task force on feminist visions for Division 35. Do you have any recollections of that?

LK – Oh yes, yeah, Michelle and I worked on that. And I think that was a time when we were really interested in putting together a bibliography, and that was ultimately what we did. And some of it was social science fiction.

AR – Oh neat. So was it in fact feminist visions of–

LK – Alternative worlds.

AR – Alternative realities, alternative worlds. Neat, neat. What happened to that bibliography?

[59:02]

LK – I think we published it, probably in the *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, but I'd have to go back and look. Maybe we didn't.

AR – And then also you worked on a public policy network task force for SPSSI. I don't know if again, this might have been in the Japanese era.

LK – Yeah, when was that?

AR – That was '82 to '84. Task force of public policy network, co-chair.

LK – I don't think I did a whole lot on that because '83 to '84 was when I was in Japan.

AR – Okay. Well one thing maybe you have recollections of, you've been on the editorial board for *JSI* over the years for a fair length of time. Do you want to comment at all on the kinds of trends, research, manuscripts, that you would have seen coming through *JSI*, or any reflections on that work, editorial work?

LK – This is not for public consumption. [Video camera turned off]

AR – Okay, well let's resume, I'm going to start asking you some sort of, not that we haven't done this already, but some sort of more big picture questions on your own reflections of your own career, as well as on psychology as a discipline, as someone who has been involved since the mid 60s, early 70s. So first of all, looking back on your own career, now that you're retired, recently retired, what do you see as the major kinds of themes and patterns in your own work?

LK – Sometimes I just see one theme about social justice and equity, and equality. And it probably also comes from my *own* awareness of how when my grandparents came here, they came from Germany, my grandmother came alone as a 15-year-old and worked as a maid, and never got much education herself. And I probably just always thought it was so unfair, that she had to settle for so much less, and that might have fuelled my interest in what's fair, and distributive justice, much more than procedural justice. And probably my interest in living in a community where there's a fair degree of equality, and we don't profit from our houses, and that sort of thing. So that's been an ongoing theme, and that's part of what my dissertation turned out to be too, about equality and inequality and what happens when people are suddenly given this huge undeserved boost in benefits and privilege; how they justify it. And I think it's that same theme that runs through my interest in feminism too, because for the longest time I just wanted to make sure that everything that we did at home, and everything that I did at work was really fair.

END