Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Luise Eichenbaum

Interviewed by Leeat Granek
New York City, NY
September 14, 2009

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LG: Leeat Granek, Interviewer
LE: Luise Eichenbaum, Interview Participant
ML: Michelle Leve, Videographer

LG – The first question is a very general question, how and when did you first develop a feminist identity?

LE – I had the great fortune of being in college from 1969 to 1973. Need I say more?! I was surrounded by the New Left, and feminism, and anti-war politics. I often think, who would I be today had I not been at college during those years? It completely shaped who I am. So I think my feminism must have first started in my early years -- '69 to '70.

I was at CUNY (City University of New York) and there was just so much activity around that that influenced me. I heard about a program within CUNY, Richmond College up in Staten Island, and they had the first women's studies program, I think it was, at least at the time, in the country. I don't know if it was definitely the truth, but that's the way they promoted themselves.

It's interesting for me to think back, because I was obviously self-identified as a feminist enough to seek out and change schools because here was a women's studies program. Even though, if you ask me, it felt much more like anti-war activity. Earlier then, once I got to Richmond and there was the women's studies program, I admit it completely opened the door and changed me. Besides the fact that I met my best friends -- who are still my best friends -- like you may meet Susie Orbach and Carol Bloom. They were both in that Women's Studies program and that's where I met them and Phyllis.

LG – Phyllis Katz?

LE – Yes.

LG – Can you talk a little bit about any of the activities that you were involved in? The anti-war movement, any rallies or anything that was part of a movement that you were a part of?

LE – You mean feminism? I mean, there was the anti-war movement and I was very involved with that. There were loads of demonstrations, organizations, and learning about feminism, Marxism and socialism. Placing all this and trying to figure out how I saw myself. Racism. These were enormous cultural and political issues that people were talking about. To feminists it was fantastic! Because the Left came out of the Civil Rights movement in this country there was a lot more discourse and discussion on racism and then if you were a Leftist who studied

Marxism (which at the time you did, because it wasn't such a dirty word at that point in this country) there were a lot of class issues. So there was already a lot discussion of class and race on the Left. The feminists really had a new voice, and one that had to be very strong, because people wanted to dismiss it. Leftists were dismissing it. Leftist men were dismissing it -- that this is about women and this isn't about me -- if you are a woman, especially a white woman. There were a lot of racial issues within the women's movement. It was seen as a white woman's issue.

So we had to develop some clear thinking. We weren't alone. We were challenged. I think there was a real resistance. Early feminism met with a resistance, well, second- It was terrific and it was really something to say, "How do I see myself as a woman, as a white woman, as a middle class woman or a student on campus, from a working class family?" Did I just go way off track?

LG – No, It's great. I was asking about involvement.

LE – In the women's movement there were several different organizations. I was part of something called the 'New York Women's Union', which again, was a more kind of Left… it was a socialist, feminist group.

LG – What did you do in that group?

LE – We had a lot of meetings. A lot of meetings [Laughs]. Wonderful! I mean, as I sort of think back. They were well-attended meetings. We had large meetings with quite a group of women. It was very exciting. They were a real cast of characters that I don't need to mention, but names that you would recognize, and this was early on.

I think we were trying to think through those kinds of questions: Who are we in relation to and within the anti-war movement or the anti-racist movement? What's our place? How do we see ourselves? What are we trying to do? Within that, I am just trying to really think back… You're throwing me back! [Laughs]…. there were small groups. We broke up into small groups, which would be more personal, so consciousness-raising groups.

I was in something called the TNG, the Tuesday Night group. Actually several of those women I made friends with were, and that became --as is typical of women getting together in smaller groups-- got very personal, even though I don't think that was the initial intention. I think the initial intention was as far as the general political discussion, but it became very personal. My consciousness was raised!

LG – Can you talk about what attracted you to psychology and how you merged your feminism, or as you describe it, your consciousness being raised, with your work at the time?

LE – Yeah, that was very important and there are some different routes that feminists in psychology were getting into. In other words, a lot of women were already in some aspect of psychology. They were studying psychology and there were some, even later on, that were already psychoanalysts who were introduced to feminism.

My route was completely the other way around! Out of feminism and out of that consciousness-raising sort of experience – it occurred simultaneously. That was before graduate school because I chose to go to graduate school already to train. So, this was when I was still an undergrad, which I find just amazing. Sorry. Some of us started, what we called a 'feminists therapist study group'. None of us were therapists yet at the time. Can this be right? How can this be possible? This was before graduate school. Sorry, I'm really having to reconstruct…

LG – No, that's okay.

LE – My route into psychology came out of feminism and consciousness-raising. In the consciousness-raising group what some of us came to see was that even though we wanted to change certain things about ourselves -- for example "I am not assertive with people in general," "I am really not assertive with my boyfriend or girlfriend," "I don't speak up," or "I feel very dependent on my partner and I know that's a weakness and I shouldn't" -- and that's evidence that I'm not a good feminist and that I haven't evolved.

There was a lot of our ideology that was ahead of our psychology and that's the way it goes. So some of us were thinking, "How does one change deeply?" because you can think, "I want to be this way," or "I believe this to be true," but then in the privacy of our own homes or our own relationships, you didn't have the wherewithal to act in ways that you thought you should and that was the route. This is about psychology and this is about deeply internalized structures that have made us who we are. We can say we want to change, but unless you know *inside* and really work on those internalized --now we would say objects-- there's a lot that you can't change. This is the route to change. So, going into psychology was absolutely out of a feminist desire to change myself. Then understanding and getting very excited about the fact that this was an enormous key for women in general. That's when we did start the feminist group. I chose to go to graduate school to train in social work.

LG – Can you talk a little bit about your experience in school? I don't think I actually know where you did….?

LE – Stony Brook. It's part of State University. It was Stony Brook. It was also, I chose it because at the time it was a very innovative program. It was a very progressive program. They actually did not like us. They didn't want us to be doing the sort of therapy training we were requesting - specific kinds of courses, because they would be more community organized in social work.

LG – Stony Brook you said?

LE – Stony Brook, the State University of Stony Brook. Susie and I both applied.

LG – Susie Orbach?

LE – Susie Orbach and I both applied to be in that program. A year later, Carol Bloom also applied to be in that program. There were feminists on faculty, although, again they were more community organizers. They weren't psychotherapists or psychologists. To be perfectly frank,

we just saw that as the shortest route to getting a license and credentials so that we could practice.

In some ways, I could say we were very full of ourselves, and it was kind of like, "Who's going to teach us?" because we're the ones who are developing and creating this. Yes, and there's tremendous arrogance to that. At the same time, there's something about it that actually has some truth to it, because we were very fortunately a part of a wave of something that was really a new development, which was breaking down gender in psychological development and starting to question this sort of unisex application of psychological development and sort of being culturally neutral.

There was no power or social dynamics taken in to account when you were reading and studying psychology. Simultaneously, while we were in graduate school, we had this feminist therapy study group that was going on. What was interesting in the study group was that we chose to study Freud. Again, at that time very unpopular amongst feminists. Many of the feminists we knew, who were in psychology, just wrote Freud off. He's a misogynist! You read his theories, and it's full of misogyny! It's patriarchal-based! It has nothing to do with us. Then again I feel like, maybe there was something -- I don't know why, I never understood this really. We were very young… I know why… I take it back. I take this back. I think what I just said earlier, the link of understanding about what was conscious was one part of what we think, but we had to know the unconscious. Okay, Freud understood the unconscious, and there is a tremendous amount of material here for us to make use of. We studied Freud, we read Dora and we read and critiqued it from a feminist viewpoint.

LG – Can you tell me about who was in this group? Who are some of the names and have you met every Tuesday?

LE – That was the consciousness group. Myself, Susie Orbach, Carol Bloom, Laura Kogel, Laurie Phillips and I am leaving out my California colleagues because I haven't continued with them.

LG – They were all psychologists?

LE – They were social workers or psychologists. It was a mix. We were teaching ourselves… it's really nice to talk to you about all this. We developed a way to study, which was someone did a case presentation, for example, and then we said, "Let's first have a personal reaction, what are we thinking [while] listening to this story?" and "What is it bringing up in us?"

We didn't particularly know about transference. We weren't thinking in those terms. We have to do the personal first. We're not just going to jump in to theory and remove ourselves from this in some objective fashion. Again, now we can look back and say that, but then, that was kind of new. If you were in psychoanalysis, you were supposed to be trying to give an objective, neutral response to the material of the patient. We thought, no that doesn't seem right at all. First, let's all personally react. So there's sadness -- describe this and I share this. Can I identify with her? That was the first part.

Then we went in to a more of, trying to understand how would this be worked with by any psychologist, social worker, or therapist? What are the issues one would see? And sort of critiquing that, and how do we see it as different, because we understand this to be a woman whose life has been -- who was shaped in a particular way? It was a really interesting process. I think we did learn a tremendous amount.

LG – It's remarkable.

LE – For then. Actually for now it would be too. For a while maybe that wouldn't have been so unusual. Now it would be again because people would probably be reluctant to reveal their own stuff.

LG – The next question was about your graduate work, so you talked a little bit about that. How did you choose which research areas to focus on while in graduate school?

LE – What we did was write down certain themes and common themes as the way we used to talk about it, because we would notice that this study we were doing for presentations -- case presentations, that there were absolutely certain things we just kept hearing about over and over again.

LG – Can we talk about what some of those things were?

LE – I just mentioned it earlier but one certainly, I mean, let's talk about dependency. That is one that Susie Orbach and I then really chose to work on. It was as though dependency was a dirty word. It was like an admission on the part of feminists. Well let's see, shall I skip ahead? Moving back up.

LG – It doesn't have to be linear. You can just talk about whatever you think is important.

LE – I think I am just trying to think about, why I just jumped ahead for a second…? Was that when we opened the Women's Therapy Centre? It really is another part of the story. We had two populations of women coming in. Some were self-identified feminists, who would never have gone to therapy because they were English and at the time and it was not what most English people did openly, unless you had a serious "mental problem" as they called them.

But feminists came in. Then, because Susie and I did a lot of interviews, there was a media interest when the Centre opened. Then we heard more and more from the general population. You might have to cut and paste because I am going back and forth… what we saw then that was interesting to us, was that the feminists had more shame about dependency then an average woman who did not define herself in any way, or hadn't been influenced by the women's movement.

LG – Just to contextualize, so let's talk about the Women's Therapy [Centre] then I can go back and ask you the other questions. I saw in that email that you said in 1976 it was in London and in 1981 in New York? Can you talk a bit about what was that process like? Why you perceived this as a need? What motivated you? What was going on at the time in 1976 and 1981?

LE – So, in 1976 this was after graduate school. So I finished Stony Brook and pretty much the end of that feminist's therapist study group. Not work-related so much as personal-related, I decided to go to London because I just finished graduate school and I didn't want to start on my very prescribed trajectory. So I just wanted to do something different. Susie, who at that time was a very dear friend, grew up in London, was thinking about returning with her partner, and in any event it made sense, and so I went to London. Now, in London, part of what also was of great interest in terms of thinking about the work was that there was a very active women's movement in England. By '75, '76, it's not there wasn't a women's movement here, but it had sort of quieted down a little bit. In England it was very active, so that was of interest. And Juliet Mitchell had written a book called *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* which was the first book that ever came out that had those two words together. So that was very exciting to us, that book. Julia was an inspiration.

We thought we're going to go to London and there will be not only an active women's movement, but an active feminist psychotherapy sort of vibe. Not a movement, but a community. When we went it was a surprise, because actually, there really wasn't. I mean, there was an active women's movement but it was very similar to here -- there were pockets of women we met who were feminists, who were psychotherapists, and people influenced by Julia's book, but it felt a little bit more academic in terms of how people related to it. So, Susie and I, I don't know again, sort of, can I say the chutzpah of youth? Thought there is no Women's Therapy Centre, there should be one! We felt confident enough to feel that what we were offering, that we had something to offer. I mean we really had something to offer in terms of our practice. So we decided, we're starting a Women's Therapy Centre, which we did in the basement of her house. She and Joe had a little house and we used a garden with pots and three rooms. We put out, I mean this is more Susie than me because she has more chutzpah than I do -- she's kind of a fearless woman. She put out a press release: "Women's Therapy Centre opens in London." It's kind of funny. We both remember and love the memory of the first printing that we did and mailing about the Centre opening. We remember the box at Chalk Farm Road where her mother lived, where we mailed this. Ok, it's really happening. We're doing this for better or worse.

LG – What was the intention of it? To offer therapy? You and Susie were going to offer therapy to…?

LE – To women who came to the Centre. We did it on a very low cost sliding scale. Women paid, I think when we opened, £2 to £6 for the therapy session. I guess we did a couple of groups, or very, very early on, on dependency, for example, on difficulties with anger, on the difference between assertiveness and anger. Very early on we did groups about sexuality and feelings of inadequacy. We should go through the….we do have the archives. It'd be interesting to see what those really early offerings were.

LG – Perhaps you could get some of them? That would be amazing.

LE – But very soon -- and this really surprised us -- there was a terrific response to the Women's Therapy Centre. So we had to find other women to work with us. That was interesting. I don't

remember, but we put out a call, and we interviewed women. The Women's Therapy Centre, that was 1976 and it still exists. It's funded by the government and private foundations and the therapists offer over, I don't know, 16 languages therapies. It's fantastic. It's a wonderful institution. So I've been very proud of that.

LG – Are you still involved with that?

LE – I am not really. No. They send me annual reports, and when I go back to London to visit, I see certain colleagues. I am not involved in any way in what the Centre does. In the early years, we got one person then another. By the time Susie and I left in 1980, I left in 1980 and she did soon after that too, there were 12 therapists and a waiting list of women wanting therapy. A waiting list! We then had an administrator and it turned into a psychotherapy institution.

LG – What do you think makes therapy feminist, as opposed to not feminist?

LE – Very good question, interesting question. What I am thinking is that you've asked that, because I've been asked before, can a man be a feminist therapist? My answer to that is 'yes'. Because essentially one's perspective and lens from which you see the world …. if it's feminist, then one would hope, and maybe I am being a little too optimistic here, but I believe that has to affect the way in which you're understanding the woman you're working with in therapy, or men you're working with in therapy. In order for you to have that kind of gender consciousness. But beyond that, it takes more than that. It's not just being a feminist in your vision, because I think a lot of the work that we did early on was studying the mother-daughter relationship. Again that was kind of new within psychoanalysis, but it's new within psychology. You have the Oedipal triangle, role of the father as very, very critical and pre-Oedipal, meaning the years prior to age 5, and those being the years with the mother. It was understood in a very particular limited point of view in a child's development. What we as feminists did, certainly I remember Nancy Chodorow, she was in California then. I think she moved to California. A lot of feminists realized our mothers were completely critical in helping to shape who we are. And so this was called pre-Oedipal phase and was something we really focused in on**.** Lots of people were talking about that. Thank goodness so much literature has been written about mother-daughter relationships.

LG – Actually not as frequently as you would think.

LE – Oh really?

LG – Yeah.

LE – That's interesting. Because for me and Susie that was …

LG – Primary?

LE – Absolutely primary! For us it was about understanding the mother's life because there was still a lot of mother blaming, which there is all over our profession and by feminists as well. It was coming out of our own mouths. We had our own issues to deal with, without mothers and all

our efforts to separate, and our terror that we would be just like our mothers. But I think this sort of comes back to your question of, what does it mean to be a feminist psychotherapist? For us, it was well, wait a second… who is this mother? She is not just an object for the child's development or an object that becomes internalized, and then is represented as an internal object relation in some unidimensional way of "mother".

This is a complex person who brings to this relationship with her infant, herself, and all the complexity of herself, and if you don't understand who that person is with all that complexity, and from our point of view, within a feminist context …. so understanding who she is supposed to be, how did she grew up in terms of her own self confidence? Her own feelings of self worth? Her own accomplishments? Her satisfactions in her life? Her resentments? Her own deprivation and neglect? This is a complicated person that you all just refer to as 'the baby internalizes the mother'.

For us, that was pivotal and wonderful and really trying to break down, not even break down but explode, open up, who is this mother? What is this little girl internalizing and this little boy? And then we did work on differences in both what we were positive, and what we speculated on mother daughter-relationships vs. mother's feelings towards her son. Who she can see is different. Whose life she can see as different or imagine and project as very different. Who has a ticket into the culture in a way that may be very different than what she imagines a woman's to be. So the identification of the mother with her daughter, the blurring of those boundaries, the love and desire of most mothers, I would say, or at least many, many mothers to have their daughter's lives be the ones that are fulfilling and maybe even more fulfilling than the mothers'. But what gets in the way of that? And a lot of things get in the way of that. It's very sad, you know, kind of tragic sometimes. But trying to look at that and seeing the mother as a person in her own right, who has suffered in her own ways, and then having some kind of compassion, which is sometimes difficult. And then feel very much for what she may have visited upon her daughter and what her daughter is struggling with. Am I getting very long-winded?

LG – No this is great. It's all great. It's for the archives. It's for whatever stories. We're trying to document the histories. This is all really great.

LE – I've been totally off track. We were in London, we were at the Centre. We were talking about feminist therapies. I am remembering, right.

LG – It's all relevant. So in 1981, in New York, how did you move from London to New York, back to New York and then you opened the Woman's Therapy Center Institute?

LE – The move again was for personal reasons. It wasn't driven by professional reasons. I was Americanized and ready to come back. Long Story, it's not important.

LG – Ok. [Laughs]

LE – Susie, I am trying to remember… I think…. I don't know. I don't even remember the details. Not terribly important. She can share the details if she chooses to. We both for different reasons, for me it was coming back to New York, for her it was returning to New York. You

know in a way there was a, I think this was a question you asked earlier that I thought was interesting. You said something about balancing, work, life and asked…

LG – That's one of the questions I didn't ask yet.

LE – No, but I read it when you sent it.

LG – Yes.

LE – There was a time… I think that question is for later, when I had the kids. I definitely got burned out. I got exhausted. The Woman's Therapy Centre was so incredibly wonderful but work completely took over my life and that was fine and wonderful. I was 27, 28, 29… you know, great. It was also, I even understood that this had gotten way out of kilter. My work is my life and I didn't know if that's what I wanted it to be.

Anyways coming back to New York, we knew we didn't want to open another Women's Therapy Centre in the same way because that one had surpassed any of our visions or expectations and we sort of didn't want at that moment. Anyhow, but now I may feel differently, but certainly back then we just didn't want an immediate repeat of 'ok this is going to take over my life again'.

So, we decided that, one part of it was personal. The other part was thinking that the number of women we could see even if we had 12 people with us, still is kind of limited, and that maybe at that point where we felt even more comfortable about what we had to offer -- that teaching and training other therapists was really what made more sense, because then that could really sort of snowball out and in theory could have a wider reach.

We did do a one-year training in London. Just a short one-year program for therapists who already had their training but wanted to look at some of these feminist issues. That had gone really well. It also pushed us to articulate the stuff. If you teach something, you have to understand it. It's a great process. Because we had done that in London, that's what made sense for us in New York… let's see if we can do a training Institute. We had our friend Carol Bloom join us. She was a friend and colleague from graduate school and that feminist therapist study group and she was in New York the whole time. So the three of us, again, I guess with chutzpah, said, ok we'll start an institute.

What does that mean? We did the research in terms of the state education department and what does it mean if you're offering a certificate? That took time, but we did all that. We applied for the 501(c)(3), so that we were non-profit. We did all the things that one has to do. It took some time. We set up, actually at that time part of what I am leaving out of this whole story is the work on the body, which also is going on with women's relationship to food, because Susie had been doing that work. She had actually started doing that work in New York before we even ever went to London. What I haven't mentioned is that at the Women's Therapy Centre, there were groups, 6-week groups. Susie did some training with therapists specifically about women's relationship to food and what you would call, and is still what people call compulsive eating. That was the first anti-declaration, anti-diet model. Now again it's wonderful, because even with

Weight Watchers that's very common here. Of course anti-diet.

No, actually Susie Orbach and Carol Munter**,** the person with whom she worked in New York, started some groups that really developed a way of thinking about all this. We were back in New York in '81, we wanted to do the training and we wanted to do it in two ways. One was sort of general feminist psychoanalysis, and that point, I am hesitating because we didn't even call it relational psychoanalysis because relational psychoanalysis… a la American work, relational psychoanalysis, I can talk about that in a minute, but it hadn't yet come in to being.

This was 1981 again and we wanted to do training especially about the body and women's relationship to food. So we started a training program. It started small. You know, what year are we in? 2009 and we still have a training program! Actually a few years ago, we stopped the general psychoanalytic program and we really started to focus much more because the body work has expanded so much. We felt that there were so many institutes in New York who were doing versions of… because there were relational psychoanalysis trainings. We just thought where our work is entirely unique and there is no place for anyone to go for it - for this work on the body. Even if you're just chronicling this, it is interesting to see because '81, I remember '82, '83 in the psychoanalytic community, you started hearing about [Donald] Winnicott, [Ronald] Fairbairn and these British object relations people who were a great influence on us. Having been in London, and again, there is a teeny bit there that's… I think is very significant to my development was finding Fairbairn. I don't know if you're familiar? Yes? It was a goldmine because as feminists we were talking about how the actual relationship both as women's caretakers, and also the culture, you know, creates, and interacts with us in ways that are critical in developing a sense of self.

That's very different from Drive Theory. Drive Theory, Freud, and then Melanie Klein, who was one of the first object relational people stayed with Drive Theory, when we discovered Fairbairn. Fairbairn was one of these early, he was at the time of Klein, and that school, but Fairbairn branched off, and his work is much more materialist. It is much more the child, the infant internalizes the caretaker, and the acts of the caretaker and the love and the disappointments and then that going inside splits, and develops and so on. But those are how internal object relations are understood. And so it was for us, when we landed on this and Harry Guntrip, who wrote about Fairbairn's work, and Winnicott. But it was very exciting to find someone within the British school, because object relations, we were really learning. We taught ourselves because we were under supervision of Leslie Conn, Susie and I for a while, Winnicott object relations man. That's a story. There's a book to be written about that man. There really is a major biography. Quite a character, we learned. We were very self-taught people.

LG – Yes, it sounds like it.

LE – Finding Fairbairn and realizing this, if we applied our feminist sort of explanations to a Fairbairnian theory -- it worked, it just worked beautifully! Again, I don't know how I got to Fairbairn.

LG – Well, the question was about the 1981 in…

LE – … the training.

LG – The training. How about talking a little bit about some of your books and articles? The majority of the ones that you sent me were about women, feminism and therapy. Can you talk about which publication you're most proud of and why? Or something that stands out for you? Which do you think has had the most impact? You can take it anywhere you would like.

LE – Well, *Understanding Women* was a book, Susie and I wrote very early on. Actually, we wrote it in London and first it was called *Outside in, Inside Out*. The British publication was *Outside in, Inside Out*, which we loved very much. When we came here, Basic Books said it didn't say what it was. So we needed to call it *Understanding Women*. That one lay out a lot of what I've just been discussing. You know the understanding of this new developmental theory.

After that, we wrote a book called *What do Women Want?: Exploding the Myth of Dependency*. I loved that book because it's written for a popular audience. What Susie and I tried to do, and I think what Susie continues to do in many of her writings, is write in an accessible way so that we reach not just an audience of people *within* psychology, but that someone who's just interested [in the subject] could pick it up and read. *What do Women Want?* is very much written in that way.

This theory which I keep referring to that I haven't really sort of, you know, gone into, but I'll see if I can do it succinctly about women's relationship to dependency is that commonly it was thought that women are dependent to people. This may sound very old, but I don't know, and the male is the independent, and the woman is dependent and with that dependency comes a certain value of 'less than.' In our work we thought about it and thought of something that now is completely obvious. Which is, "Excuse me? Everyone is dependent on women! Women take care of everybody, so how are women the ones that who are dependent and needy in ways that they feel are overly needy?" There is something very wrong with this picture. That was at the heart of what we did when we said "What does it mean that from very early on mothers have to teach their daughters not to really expect a certain kind of emotional attunement or even physical care but to be the ones who have to provide it for others?"

And that we said was very painfully present in the mother-daughter relationship itself. A mother may sort of act on ways with her daughter that doesn't foster a sense of entitlement for this young girl, but rather the mother in some ways is in some ways protecting her daughter in this world by learning how to curb her own needs. So, and we thought that male dependency was completely under-acknowledged and that we all understand that in order to feel confident and secure and able to go into the world and be more of a separate and autonomous person, one needs to have a very secure base.

We were suggesting at that time that boys could more easily do that because that secure base was there and it wasn't going to go away. A mother knew, thinking heterosexually, that her son was going to go on and have this kind of care. He could expect it and have it for his life and that gave tremendous freedom and mobility to boys and men knowing they have that secure anchor and base. For girls, we said it's more complicated because we sort of, what do you do if you're heterosexual? I'm not going to get into this, it's really complicated but, you're going to give up

your mother, you're going to become a heterosexual woman who's going to be the provider. It's a way to understand why there's so much disappointment and anger in marriage. Because women think "you don't understand and what I am trying to explain is …" and he says "What do you want? I don't know what you want. Why don't you just…?" A woman feels "I don't really have words to say, I can't say this or I don't know or you should know. You should read my mind." I mean I could go on here for hours and hours now. This is the theory and I love this part of our theory and I think it was, I think it continues today sort of… sadly.

LG – I still think it's very relevant.

LE – Very relevant isn't it?

LG – Yeah, very.

LE – I think we should do another version, we really should update it and do it because it really hasn't changed all that much. I mean what has changed is that men are fathers and that's wonderful and thrilling. To this day, I see all these men walking around with strollers and doing all this stuff and really competent. I still get a thrill. I think, feminism did this. This is enormous and this is a real change. But yes, other aspects of that sort of inequity, equality, and dependency are still very much there. So in *What do Women Want?* we wrote about the difference between economic dependency and women's status being relegated to being economically dependent for many women. But that with emotional dependency, in fact, women are very deprived of a certain kind of care. So *What do Women Want?* is and always has been a favorite of mine.

Then we went on, and these are all with Susie, we wrote together. *Between Women: Love, Envy and Competition in Women's Friendships*. I liked that book a lot, and that book has gotten more attention, I mean in a certain way. It has just gotten more attention. And again, you know consistent with, I think with feminists, or as feminists, we certainly were committed to doing. We took certain concepts like envy and competition in particular, and we sort of analyzed them from a feminist perspective. And we said this is something you can talk about. As I think about it, we were naming things women feel a lot of shame about. For example, shame about feeling dependent. They shouldn't. They feel shame about feeling competitive with other women and we all do. They feel shame about envy. And these are inevitable outcomes of our culture and the ways in which capitalism works actually, I think. So that we didn't just take a feminist position of "Competition is great." You know, that's one feminist line. "Competition is great for...go get it." That's not here, nor there for me. That's not relevant. To say what one has a competitive feeling, what's really going on? We sort of broke it down to understanding one's need for recognition and visibility, and that being an invisible person who does not get recognized for herself is a very uncomfortable place to be, as it should be. What we might experience as a competitive feeling with another woman in a room, in a group, who seems to be getting some kind of attention, what is it that we *really* want? We want to feel that we're also seen for whatever, attributes, qualities of our selfhood that we would like to be related to and noticed. With envy, which again, is just an enormous or a very… I think of as a very, very, very common feeling that no one knows what the hell to do with it.

LG – Right, because you're not supposed to talk about that.

LE – Yeah.

LG – Or acknowledge it

LE – Or acknowledge it and also on either side…

LG – Right.

LE – Right, so that if you feel you have the object of envy because you just got your PhD and your friend is still struggling, and she's you know, three years away from finishing her dissertation. She's at your party, or you have a great boyfriend and you're going to get married or a girlfriend and a partner is. Your single friends are kind of suffering and miserable and "How am I going to find someone?" … all that stuff. The person who's the object of envy also suffers, because she sort of feels she has to minimize or deny the good stuff that she does have in her life. We tried to look at that and say, this is not what feminism is about. Women want to be supporting one another. We do want to celebrate achievements and fulfillment in this life in whatever form it comes. And so, what do we do about that? But, you're exactly right. It has to somehow be talked about and acknowledged. If I were say… which example should I use? The one with the boyfriend or the one with the….

LG – Sure.

LE – "You're so lucky because you and so and so are such a great couple. He's such a great guy and I find all these guys who are idiots. They all run away and nobody wants to be committed. I am sick of it. I've had six in a row." I am sure you've both heard stories like this.

LG – Yes.

LE – Know them well? So for that person to say, I am so envious of you. I look at the two of you and I just think it's so much what I want. Think about that. So then the friend who has it, rather than say, "Oh, believe me, you don't want this because he's this, he's that, and you think it looks so good" rather than… "I know you do, of course. I want to help you or just acknowledge the sadness or the loneliness or whatever it is." It's just kind of staying real. It's just about being able to be in the moment and be real and to acknowledge a feeling state with a friend. So in "Between Women", we sort of go into great detail about also understanding why we experience envy and why we experience shame.

LG – Do you think psychology should become more politicized? Or how can it become more politicized?

LE – By politicized, do you mean because for example with Division 39 in the APA? There's a lot of talk about.

LG – Division 39 is psychoanalysis?

LE – Yes. Psychologists used at Guantanamo Bay, for example, for torture. So there's that kind of politicization, and yes, absolutely, because it already is. I mean this is always, this is the history of when you have Left politics suddenly it becomes political, but when the Right is using psychologists to come up with ways of you know, better, using psychological mechanisms for torture. Isn't that political? It's political. It's already political.

LG – So how do you raise awareness about that? That's its already political, because I don't know if that's obvious to all psychologists.

LE – Well, you know what's interesting too? It takes me back because in a way going way back and this is again early development of feminists' psychology or psychotherapy.

LE – The politicization part, all I was going to say, you don't need necessarily need to have… Back in the day people were against therapy, thinking it is about having people adjust to the accepted order and normalize people, and if you were a real leftist and feminist. Think about, what is it we're trying to do? That's another question.

LG – Can you speak about the ways in which your own values, religion, spirituality may have influenced your work, if at all?

LE – My values, absolutely. Pre-feminism, it was social justice, and so I guess there is something about inequity, about mistreatment, about pain, that was a part of why I was a social activist, why I was a political activist too, and those social values, you know there is a direct line, I think for me, there was no glitch between that and wanting to do psychotherapy and be that, to have the privilege of being that intimate with any number of people who are opening themselves up to me in their pain, or their desire, and wanting on a very personal level to feel a bit more powerful in their lives. Or people who are making choices and don't feel powerless, and sort of victimized or ignorant about what the hell is shaping them and what the forces are. But, I think there is a real parallel between understanding forces that impinge on one can and then how one stands up to them and has a sense of empowerment.

The spiritual, the religious? I am not a religious person so that wouldn't have influenced me. The spiritual, only later in my life. Not early on, but certainly now much more so, and that comes through a series of losses in my own life and trying to understand a deeper meaning of how to live this life and finding my own, what I think you are referring to as something that is spiritual.

LG – Let's do some wrap-up questions. What would you like to see happening in the field of psychology in terms of the research that you do?

LE – I would like to see more work on our visual culture and its influence on people. Although, more specifically, to be perfectly honest, on girls and women. Its part of the work that we're doing now and that's what I sort of alluded to before… the work on the body and the eating work and it has moved just so far along. We're working on a project now for Women's Therapy Center Institute called "Endangered Species: Preserving the Female Body." We're really looking at how visual culture, the fashion industry, the magazines and the media are creating a mental illness, mental health epidemic for girls and women, and that it is, you know -- doing this

history to say there are so many things that have changed and are better for women thirty years later –absolutely! Undoubtedly! But this, bodies, and the ways in which we think we are, our bodies we live in, our bodies are separate from our psyches. It's impossible to develop a healthy psyche in this culture in which you look at digitalized photos that aren't real bodies of stick-thin, beyond anorexic size-zero women, and then that's supposed to be the model of what we aspire to be? It's really damaging. So, I could really go off on a thing on that which I won't but that's the direction I think that we would like to… I would like to take my work and work with the institute.

LG – What kind of barriers, obstacles and discrimination have you experienced because of your feminism or being a woman?

LE – I've lived a little unorthodox life here in terms of how I've practiced, so I've been spared. I am not in a hospital or an agency dealing with a staff and then coming up with trying to fight my feminist views. I've lived this life of women and women's organizations. I think there are other people who I am sure have really interesting stories to tell you. I haven't had that. If anything, I've had the fortune of some acknowledgment. I mean the reason that I am called in to speak at a conference or a clinic is because they want to hear a feminist view. It's a little bit the opposite… I get recognition for the feminism because in so many places, it's so lacking that they feel like ok, usually it's some women within some setting that organized to say, when they have some kind of speakers, this is something that we want to hear about.

LG – How do you balance the demands of your personal life with your professional life?

LE – It's so much harder when you're a young woman. In my case, my family and my kids, and that for me was during the 80s when I got back to New York. Again, I think I'm really fortunate that I had a quite good degree of control. So I chose, I chose to work three days a week. I worked out my writing schedule and my practice and balanced it when my kids were young, with time with them, which for me, was really important. My husband's a writer so that's also fortunate. You know, we were very fortunate. We had a lot of control over a parent being at home and spending a lot of time with our kids. When I say fortunate, I value it so much because so many of the women I see in therapy, and men, is just to me, so upsetting and horrifying, because I feel for them. They go off to work at seven in the morning and they come home at seven at night and somebody else takes care of their kids. I just think, whoa [Covers face with hands]. So I did find the balance. Although I think work always pulled in ways that could feel like a stressor really more when my kids were at home and younger. Now it's easier because they're up and gone.

I, also, just because I've gotten older and feel more able to say no to things and make choices that are based on what I know and feel. You know, it's not an obligation. This happens when you get older. It's a great gift of aging. There are a lot of things about aging that are very difficult - this is one of things that is a gift of it. You feel freer to make certain choices that make sense and things just come easier.

LG – That's related to the next question. What advice could you give to a feminist woman working in psychology now? What remains to be accomplished and changed in the field?

LE – This is so much harder, because again, I just feel, we had such fortune to come out of a very lively feminist movement. There was so much support and I feel that feminists today have less of a sort of social movement to support them. What I want to say is that "Know that your feminism is so valuable in whatever it is you're interested in or whatever area of research or interest you're trying to develop." That feminist lens has to be central to what you're trying to examine because I think that the pressure to just become accredited, and sort of, I don't know… it's sad. It's just what happened in general in the '90s, that being taken seriously means that a lot of feminists felt they had to go a very traditional route and really get acknowledged and credentialed in very traditional ways. And I appreciate that, and we all live in this real world, and they want that amount of power, and if that's the route to it -- you do it. But, I do think it comes at a cost. If you then have that be in the community with whom you identify, and by that I just mean just a perfectly decent, but not a particularly feminist psychotherapy or psychoanalytic, whatever it would be community, great work all terrific… but be the person who brings in that voice and holds the voice. If it's not there, make that contribution and most, if not all of the women in the room, will appreciate you speaking up and will feel acknowledged. Support has to happen through people trying to maintain a voice or insert a feminist voice.

LG – I want to be respectful of your time. I have lots of other questions but just to kind of give you a chance if there's anything I haven't asked you or anything that I have asked you about that you want to expand or anything that you feel is important to have on the archive or that you want to add?

LE – We covered even more than I thought we would!

LG – It's so funny because there are like 15 more questions.

LE – Give me an example?

LG – Ok. How is psychology as a professional discipline changed? Tell me about the role of mentoring in your career? What were your mentors? How do you play a role as a mentor? What inroads have feminists made in psychology? What roadblocks remain?

LE – I think the inroads of feminists or the contribution already has been taken for granted and that's terrific because feminist ideology has infiltrated. To go back for one second, actually, because we didn't do this…the development of relational psychoanalysis and part of relational psychoanalysis in this country, people at NYU, Stephen Mitchell is most known for, Jody Davies and Jessica Benjamin.

In the early '80s, when I was here and these British object relationalists were starting to get to America, that was exciting, and also The William Alanson White Institute and [Harry Stack] Sullivan who was much more … That was the American. What happened was a marriage, I think of the American personal school of Sullivan and the British object relations school of Britain. They did great work in bringing these together, and voila relational psychoanalysis! What some of us wrote about back then, and I don't think it has gotten enough attention, a colleague of mine Laurie Phillips who is no longer with us, a dear friend and colleague who died of breast cancer, she and I wrote a paper and also Susie and I wrote a paper on the unacknowledged feminist

contribution to the development of relational psychoanalysis. That being, the subjectivity of the analyst. Right, again something that we all take for granted. I think you probably take for granted and for the past ten years subjectivity of the analyst, subjectivity of a real person and how do you…? How it has evolved within psychoanalysis? I am speaking of course of a more neutral stance of the analyst, or even what was thought of as traditional counter-transference in what ways you're brining your issues here unresolved and that has all changed. It was such an exciting time. Really, '85 to '95 in America in psychoanalysis was such an exciting time… so this view of analyst as subject.

The analyst most often in the transference is the mother. Terrific! Male analysts and feminists contribution of mother as subject, not just the mother as object. I think greatly influenced even though, this is so arrogant of me, but I think there was an unconscious assimilation of that step in that contribution, so that it appeared suddenly in the form of as analyst as subject and two subjectivities, except for Jessica [Benjamin], who of course, Jessica was a feminist. She acknowledges feminism, and to his credit Lewis Aron, a person who's in psychoanalysis who contacted Lori and I about that paper. He also saw… there was, and I don't need to name names, but there was some acknowledgement. That's a little story that I wanted to tell you. That is out of feminism directly.

LG – Yeah, I think it's really important to include that. Michelle, do you want to ask any questions?

ML – A lot of what you were talking about earlier with the mother as subject being more complicated than just being an object, I wonder how you feel that relates to attachment theory? If attachment theory has a place in feminist perspective or if it maybe is more aligned with the traditional view of mother as…?

LE – That's a really interesting question because I don't think that people necessarily have been applying that critical lens yet, so Michelle has just identified more research for feminists today. Attachment theory has come on the scene really late. Bowlby was in England. Bowlby and attachment theory in England is not something new. Whereas here, what would you say 5 years? And now attachment theory is a very big thing. Of course Attachment theory again is early development, those very first minutes. I don't know how you feel, but when I go to some of the presentations, of you know, video monitoring like Beatrice Bebe and others, who do terrific work looking at the attachment bond, and you're looking at the mother and this infant. I can get those old shivers of the ways in which the mother is being talked about. The face of the mother… you see this angry face. What's happening to this poor infant because of his angry mother? I too, I cringe. It's not that I am not in there cringing. There's no added dimension to talk about this mother with some humanity and some social perspective. I think that's a great question and I think that's an area that needs developing. It's ripe for study.

LG – Thank you.