**Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project**

**Interview with Michelle Lafrance**

***Interviewed by Lisa Feingold and Jenna Mackay***
***Pittsburgh, PA***
***March 4, 2016***

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**Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project**
**Interview with Michelle Lafrance**
**Interviewed by Lisa Feingold and Jenna MacKay**
**York University**
**Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**
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LF: Lisa Feingold, Interviewer

JM: Jenna MacKay, Interviewer

ML: Michelle Lafrance, Interview participant

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LF: We like to start off by asking our interviewees about the emergence of their feminist identity.

ML: That really emerged for me in my undergraduate university experience. I think I must have been in my third year and I was taking Intro Sociology with Anne-Louise Brookes at St. Francis Xavier University. Now being a professor, I realize how brave and radical she was, doing the work that she was. I was taking Intro Sociology and our textbooks were Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale*, and [the] novel [*In Search* of] *April Raintree* and all of these novels that really documented the experiences of women's lives and it just really cracked me open and all of a sudden everything made sense. I think that that's the experience of a lot of individuals - that once they are introduced to feminism that's the lens that you can't ever take off. It just made everything so clear and just made everything so new for me and that was really the start of it. And so the power of what can happen in an intro class, it was a really exciting time.

LF: Was your family more traditional, or were they supportive of a feminist perspective?

ML: My family certainly was. I'm an only child and both of my parents were very supportive of that I think. I don't know that my mom would have used the word 'feminist,' – I don't know that I've heard her use it before but she certainly was brought up on Steinem and in fact she told me when I was born her second thought was, "Oh, she has to be a girl," and everything that that entails, and she was ferocious in supporting me in anything that I chose to do. So very, very supportive.

LF: I wanted to change the direction a little bit and ask you about what attracted you to psychology, how did you get into psychology?

[00:02:21]

ML: That again was at St. FX, and it was happening at the same time. It's funny, all of these questions, you don't think about these things until you're asked. So I was taking this course with Anne-Louise Brookes, and at the same time I was in chemistry and I was in science, and at the time you could make dramatic changes in your curriculum in a way that I know students aren't often able to now without significant delays. And so in my third year I was destined for honours in chemistry. And I was taking all kinds of psych courses for some reason, because that counted as a science at St. FX at the time, and all of a sudden I took some psych classes and I thought they were really interesting, and I was learning about feminism, and I learned that you could combine feminism and psychology, and my profs were letting me do all these different kinds of projects because they knew that I was interested in feminism. Gary Brooks allowed me to do a project in history of psych because he was acknowledging that he wasn't prepared to cover women's contributions to the history of psychology and so instead of a major paper he let me do a presentation with a couple of other colleagues in the class. So it was just really exploding and I had the mentorship and support of faculty. And so my interest in psychology is the same as my interest in feminist psychology. It's always been one and the same for me because they emerged for me at the same time. So I was learning about feminism, switching from chemistry into psychology, I was discovering all of that in some powerful, crystalizing years there.

JM: Can you talk a little bit about how you realized feminist psychology was a thing, I feel like a lot of folks in their undergrad don't realize that that exists as a discipline-

ML: Absolutely.

JM: How did you discover this as an option, or that the two could be blended?

ML: From learning about it in sociology, because they were talking about women's lives, I think it just didn't occur to me that it wouldn't be there, because I could see it so clearly in sociology, and I ended up working with Ann Bigelow for my honours thesis and we were looking at body image and eating attitudes, and she gave me all kinds of direction in terms of reading in feminist scholarship, so I was learning about psychology at the same time that I was learning about feminism. So I just didn't really have a lot of time to learn about psychology in the absence of learning about feminism, so it was perfect for me. But you're right, a lot of students, even today don't know, and when they finally get to take a fourth year seminar, I get to work with them, they always say, "How did I not know this?" And I always say, "I don't know," it should be rectified earlier. But yeah, I was really blessed in that way.

LF: And were you involved in any other feminist activism at the time?

ML: I think that was all happening so fast that predominantly my investment was in the scholarship and I was full throttle with all that and trying to figure it out. So that is where I've put a lot of my energies.

LF: And then I notice that you did a Master's in social psychology, did that come out of your interest in feminist psychology?

[00:05:46]

ML: I went to graduate school in psychology because I wanted to join the conversation. And I knew that I had to do a lot of work and reading in order to do that. My interest in psychology to be honest, had never been at the forefront of clinical, I went in wanting to know and learn more. Which in a lot of ways now I think, that was quite a commitment – and a luxurious commitment to go into that much debt because I wanted to learn. But I'm glad I did it. So I wasn't going in to become a clinician, even though I ended up doing a PhD in clinical. Ann Bigelow's mentorship and support prompted me to apply to graduate school, and to want to continue to do more. Master's was quite bumpy, and I learned that not everyone – I expected this open, nurturing feminist experience - and it wasn't for the most part, especially early on. And so I took a year off after my master's to go back and lick some wounds and to just read about feminist scholarship in Canada, and if I were to do my PhD, who would I possibly want to do it with?

So I was comfortable living hand to mouth and spending all of my time reading and I came across Janet Stoppard's work at the University of New Brunswick and I thought, "I'll always wonder if I could have done this, so I'll just apply to work with Janet and if I get in I'll do it and if I don't then I'll figure it out." And so being accepted to work with her, that was a really, really nurturing intellectual experience. I loved doing my PhD and it was fun. So it was back to that, but I needed to do a year of trying to figure out where I wanted to go and who I needed to work with to make that happen.

JM: You said that you wanted to join the conversation, can you describe what that means to you?

ML: I was just starting to learn and to read sporadically, to read kind of catch as catch can if I came across an article, and then all of a sudden I would be reading Striegel-Moore at the time, in the '90s, and [I thought] "Oh my god, this is amazing." So when I came across these things they would blow my mind and I just wanted to learn more. And I just knew that I wasn't in a place - I wanted to know the landscape. So I wanted to know what was out there, what was being said, what had been worked out, where did I fit, what did I agree with, what did I not agree with. So I wanted to kind of dive in and learn and grow before I entered into that conversation.

JM: And you mentioned during that year that you were reading a lot of Canadian scholarship, in addition to Janet Stoppard, who else's work was inspiring you and you were immersing yourself with at that time?

ML: One that really stands out is a book called *Consuming Passions* by Catrina Brown, she's a social worker now at Dalhousie and she's a contributor to our most recent book. I used that book – it's a scholarly book – I used it as a journal. I just wrote all over it and it was really important to me. There were many. I've never really adhered to disciplinary boundaries all that well. It wasn't just in psychology for sure.

[00:09:32]

LF: Often a question that we ask in interviews is what mentoring is like to you? What's your experience as a mentor? Some people say, "Ask my students." So we wanted to ask what it was like working with Janet Stoppard, who has also been interviewed by Psychology's Feminist Voices.

ML: That was a wonderful experience. A really, really, really, rich, nourishing intellectual experience. It's exactly what I had hoped for. When doing your PhD, it's quite a commitment. And to have it feed back to you as much as you're putting into it, is I think a unique experience. And she was wonderful. She was, she is, a powerful force. She was a powerful force at the university, and a powerful force in feminist psychology, and I felt she always had my back. She had very high expectations and standards and had no problem in letting people know if they were not meeting them. So you had to be on your toes, but that's why I was there, so we actually had a fantastic relationship that grew into a friendship. It was sparky and it was a really, really wonderful time. It wasn't smooth sailing the whole way through, It's challenging work to go through your PhD, but she was the perfect supervisor for me and I'm just so, so grateful that I got to learn from her. And I think in large part because I have such respect for her scholarship, I think that's something that students really, really need to think about. It's not just getting into a program, but it's who are you working with, and who are you being set up to learn from. And she is who I wanted to learn from so it worked really well. But I think those are important questions to ask before embarking on this journey.

LF: That sounds like a great match. I wanted to touch on - when you did start your PhD in clinical psychology and were able to work a supportive mentor, was there something that drove you to look at women's experiences with the medical model of mental health. Was that your first area of interest?

ML: Yeah, that's why I was there.

LF: How did you find that interest?

ML: From my year of doing research and looking at feminist scholarship in Canada. It's not to say that there weren't other feminist scholars in Canada that I was also interested in working with, not at all, but I was just really taken with her work, I thought it was absolutely brilliant, and I just read it and re-read it and re-read it. For

fun. You know? So I thought this is where I need to go, if I can do it, this is where I need to go.

LF: Your research is also quite political, I was wondering if you could talk a bit about your experiences with merging politics with academic psychology?

ML: What do you mean?

[00:12:39]

LF: Feminism is quite political –

ML: Inherently yeah

LF: Have you encountered any resistance in bringing perspectives in that might be challenging to that status quo?

ML: I have in some way. So has my political or has my feminist work been reacted to? And has it been –

LF: Yeah

ML: negative? I would say by and large I have not experienced significant challenges, and if I have I have somehow stepped over them. There are a few exceptions to that, an early disastrous job talk in which the department was quite clearly not comfortable with the feminist, no – beyond that, I think one of the interview questions was, "How would you feel about joining a faculty that was openly hostile to a feminist perspective?" That was one of my interview questions [laughs] I think it was my third job talk and I was like, "What?" [laughs] I won't even repeat some of the things that were said in that interview, but [they were] very heterosexist. With that one notable and striking exception, I have felt really supported in the work that I have put out there.

[End of video 1]

LF: I wanted to ask, because your research critiques the medical model of mental illness, that's quite contradictory to some of the themes in mainstream psychology in some ways, I was wondering if you could talk about why exploring the ideologies of society is important to you? Why challenging the status quo is important to you?

ML: The work on challenging the medical model of psychology is dangerous work, it's very easily misunderstood to suggest that I'm dismissing the reality and the pain of women's experiences, or even the embodiment of women's experiences, and that's not at all what I'm suggesting. But that whole area of work is something that Janet let me fly with. It all came from the interviews I conducted with women who identified as having recovered from depression. I'm always saying to students let

the data be your guide. So it came from the interviews and that's where my interest came from. When I interviewed women who were depressed, and their experiences of emerging from that depression or recovery – some of them used the word, some of them didn't, they struggled with how to make sense of their experiences given the dominance of the medical frame for understanding that. So I followed their struggles and unpacked it and that's where that line of inquiry came from.

LF: To delve a little more into your experience with interviewing women who have had experiences with the medical model, what was your experience of hearing their stories, did it line up with your expectations?

[Tape 2 00:01:58]

ML: I heard the whole gamut, the whole range, from women who were saying, "I was diagnosed and given medication and it was lifesaving," and those who reacted against it and said, "There is nothing wrong with my brain, it was situations in my life, and becoming a feminist was central my to recovery." So I interviewed women across that whole spectrum and I think my training and my positioning from a more clinical perspective – because when you are talking face to face with a woman who is talking about her experiences of pain and distress, you're right with them, so I believe all of them. And I want to support all of their understandings and their experiences, I also want to unpack why they're all working, why all these different ways of understanding are working. So I think it's really important that we're respectful and honouring, but that doesn't deny our ability to critique and unpack, so trying to hold both at the same time is important.

JM: Can you talk a little bit about that experience of holding both at the same time and that process of negotiation, and just what that looks like. I imagine that must be difficult in writing and research to kind of hold those two pieces.

ML: When I was first doing my analysis, it took me a long time to find a way through that because, and this is the process of reflexivity. And I think some interviews resonated with me more, when I was reading them later, in the moment I'm right there with you. Reading them later some of them resonated more closely with my own experiences and belief sets than others. And so then I just got very curious. I struggled for a little while about how do I, when you get your first data set you think I can't honour these in any way other than to perforate them and then hand them all in as a dissertation because I don't want to miss anything, but I started to then get curious about why do some resonate more clearly with me, what are the assumptions that are happening, what's being spoken and unspoken in those interviews, and also to get very curious about what are those times that raise my hackles? What's going on there? And to unpack all of it and to get curious about what's going on, reading between the lines of all of it.

JM: Can I dig a little bit deeper? Maybe some of those processes that came up and then how that integrated into your dissertation. Because I imagine for students that

are getting started with qualitative research, we know that we need to be aware of our assumptions and our values and our biases, to be reflexive, it can be difficult to know what that looks like in practice, so can you describe a little bit about how that informed your process.

ML: I'm not sure if this is speaking directly to your question but I'm thinking about one interview that I really struggled with in particular. And I struggled with it because the woman was basically, I heard in what she was saying, her denial of women's experiences of profound pain – of some of the other women, I heard her dismissing, because she was saying well, I have such contempt for women who just take medication. And so I was raising my hackles on that, and defending the medical model. And I wrote about this episode quite transparently in some of my work and how I even worked to cut her off in the interview. So what was I responding to? And unpacking that led to my unpacking of the medical model itself, and looking at how it provides a kind of landline of legitimacy that is so desperately needed for people who are in such desperate pain. So I understand very clearly why, she was denying the reality, in some ways saying it wasn't real or powerful enough, and the nerve in telling me that the woman I interviewed yesterday just needed to pick herself up by her bootstraps, come on. So I got hooked into the very same dilemmas that they were experiencing. And I wrote about it, like look at what I did, look at how bad my interviewing was here and what was going on for me.

[Tape 2 00:07:14]

LF: Wow, very self-aware.

ML: [Hmm]

LF: I wanted to talk a bit about the importance of studying women's counter-storytelling as a form of resistance.

ML: I think through all of my research I've always been really interested in resistance. That's the thread of my research. I'm always interested in talking back, so studying women's experiences of depression and then recovery. So while we know that women certainly are much more likely than men to experience depression, we also know that they get through, so what's going on, what helps, how can we support women in their processes toward living well. Sue McKenzie-Mohr is a colleague and a dear friend in the social work department at St. Thomas University and her research, we didn't even know [each other] when we were doing our respective programs of research, but her research looked at women's experiences of rape and she asked about women who identified with the concept of living well after rape. So our research projects really mirrored each other in a lot of ways, and through our ongoing conversations about research we got very excited about resistance and how do we resist dominant discourses in our lives in a variety of different ways.

I subsequently did some research on self-care, so if depletion and self-negation was a process that was implicated in a lot of women's experiences of depression, then how do women manage to take care of themselves? I'm not explaining that fully but, so I was looking at self-care, that's another place of resistance. That and leisure as a form of resistance as well. And then some newer research with Dr. Monica Stelzl. We're doing a study of women's experiences of faking orgasm and not doing this normative act – of how women resist faking orgasm. So I've just always been interested in not only how dominant discourses shape our subjectivities and our experiences, but also the room for resistance. And that's been probably the most dominant thread in the research that I've done.

[Tape 2 00:09:47]

JM: Can we talk a little about how you came to resistance as a focus?

ML: Hmm, how did I? Somehow I just think it's – I just always wanted to know kind of the more positive end of this, I think we've had this really rich legacy of scholarship that has clearly documented and very richly documented the ways in which we're oppressed by hegemony, [but] you [know] the Foucauldian line, where there's power there's resistance, I'm always just really interested in what we can do, how can we push back. So I'm not, I think it's just kind of unfolded, but I'm always just interested in "okay what, what can we do?"

LF: A bunch of your research involves discursive analysis, how did you start using that methodology?

ML: Working with Janet, (laughs) thinking back to my interview with her, just to get into graduate school, she said "What's your epistemological position?" (laughs) "I don't know, what are you talking about?" So we talked it out, she was asking some questions, so I was able to spend a good long time exploring epistemology and ontology and I'm sure I slowed down my research program by diving into all of that, but I thought I have to figure this out first before I can move forward. So from my explorations of epistemology and ontology, I then got to a place where I felt comfortable that I knew where I was standing, and from a postmodern, social constructionist, critical realist perspective, that I was looking at "okay, what methodologies are going to enable me to ask the questions that I want to ask from that place?" So discourse analysis, and then I had to do the whole thing about discourse analysis, what kinds of discourse analysis, can they be combined, which different approaches, and so arrived finally at Margaret Wetherell [who] has a paper looking at a combined approach, Foucauldian analysis with conversational analysis. I'm really compelled by those approaches that are able to hold both again, here we go, holding both approaches to discourse analysis.

JM: Before we move on, what do you feel a discourse analysis brings to psychology in general, and maybe feminist psychology in particular.

ML: For me it's been really central because it allows a deeper exploration of power than positivist approaches have, it's just more compelling to me in that way. It's almost, you're able to join with the person who's speaking, and empathize, and believe, and support, and I think it's getting back to that idea that I was just talking about earlier, about being able to respect individuals' accounts of their own lives and deconstruct and unpack at the same time. So you can have multiple layers of analysis going on at the same time.

LF: I noticed on your CV that you're a founder of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Narrative, can you talk a little bit about your experience of working with that?

[Tape 2 00:13:47]

ML: Yeah, that has led me to get requests to review papers that are narrative, and the whole time I've kind of gone in really excited about the work and a little kicking and screaming at the same time, because I'm not a narrativist, I'm a discourse analyst, but my dear friend John McKendy was the pivotal force in getting me involved with CIRN because they're really looking at very similar things to what I've been looking at. So Sue McKenzie-Mohr, Bill Randall, now Clive Baldwin is our CRC (Canada Research Chair), and narrative and Beth McKim. So we've been a small but formidable team establishing the narrative centre, Clive has now kind of taken it on, we've established it and he's now the CRC and has time and money to perpetuate it, so he's been the engine the last couple of years.

LF: And I wanted to ask, what are the projects that that center focuses on?

ML: They're doing some interesting stuff on narrative care and I've chosen to do some different research and focus on different things, so Sue and I getting this book out, and other projects. In terms of organizational involvement, I would say a key group for me has been ISCHP, the International Society for Critical Health Psychology, and they've been an amazing group, and I strongly recommend getting on their web list, on their email list, and some amazing –

[end of video 2]

ML: things come through there all the time, including postdoc opportunities and job prospects. And so I've been particularly involved with ISCHP and other ISCHPers around the globe really.

JM: Can you tell us about your involvement with ISCHP?

ML: I'm on their – we're kind of a disorganization but I'm on their executive committee. We have a lot of online – because we're all over the place – we have some conversations. Mostly their big thing is their conference that happens every two years, it's happening next year in the UK, it should align with POWS [Psychology

of Women Section of the British Psychological Society], so it's highly recommended that you check that out. And so the forefront of their work is critical psychology, and that's been really synonymous with feminist psychology in my experience and they're discursive, so most of them are doing discourse analysis or some iteration of that, so that's where my people are. (laughs)

[Tape 3 00:01:10]

JM: It's always good to find your people.

ML: Yeah! It's essential to find your people! It's been pivotal for me, just unexpected levels of support that have come from just that alignment has really been important.

LF: You're also an editor at the journal *Feminism & Psychology*, how is that experience?

ML: Wonderful, it's a great journal, it's an amazing journal. Like Janet, the standards are very, very high, but it's very supportive and I've never seen a review come through that wasn't supportive. It can be extensive and even rejecting, but supportive. So Jeanne Marecek, Ginny Braun, Nicola Gavey, Catriona McLeod. They've done such amazing work with that journal. It's a touchstone for me.

LF: Journal editors tend to have a lot of power in making decisions in how they want to see psychology be taken up and how, maybe that's too strong –

ML: What gets through.

LF: They get to decide what gets through. I was wondering what the goals of the journal *Feminism & Psychology* might be and how you see that?

ML: Hmm, right now I'm scrambling in my brain (laughs) what is the mission statement of F&P, because I do not want to misrepresent them, so I'm going to say - let's look at the mission statement for F & P - because I don't want to speak for them.

JM: Can you talk about the importance of having supportive reviews? And why this journal is like a touchstone for you?

ML: For me again because discourse analysis is understood there and I still find that in a lot of feminist psychology journals, postmodern approaches are still not widely understood, and you can still get sent out for review and get reviewers that just clearly didn't understand what you were doing. And so I'm okay with getting critical feedback if you know what I was doing. It's a very different thing when they're trying to turn an apple into an orange. So I know that if I send a manuscript to F&P it will be properly reviewed and thoroughly reviewed. And so I know it will be the best that it can be on the end of that. There was another part of your question there, so why it was a touchstone and –

[Tape 3 00:04:11]

JM: And the importance of having supportive reviews?

ML: I think we're all in this together and even though I know F&P understands postmodern work, I think we need to hook elbows together, we have a lot of work to do as feminist scholars from all different epistemological and methodological alignments, and I think it's just a waste of our energies to squabble based on those kinds of things. I think we have to be respectful and supportive of people's work from where they are and we can't- what does that do? Infighting and territorial work. I know we've got a lot to do, so let's all allies get together and support feminist movements in their various iterations.

LF: I wanted to switch gears a little bit and talk about your roles as teacher and mentor, so I understand you teach your undergraduates about Psychology's Feminist Voices. I wanted to ask how you go about bringing feminism into teaching?

ML: I am at a small liberal arts undergraduate university, and I would say it's a feminist place. So when you asked me earlier about the response to my work, I feel very supported at St. Thomas, doing the work that I do and in fact, I would expect that, maybe it's just who I'm hanging out with, but I think feminism is just understood, as a way of being in the world, so my teaching – again being mindful I'm working with students right out of high school, and who have by and large had no experience at all with the F-word. So maybe this is unfair but I kind of introduce it surreptitiously at first. I remember Anne-Louise Brookes, she did the opposite and I really hold her in high regard for doing what she did, I remember the very first day of intro to sociology, she said I'm teaching this course from a feminist perspective and if you don't like this, now is the time to leave. And she held the room, and masses of people exited the room, and she held it until they left and then turned to the remaining student and said, "now then, let's get started." You know? And I have such high esteem for that. My approach has been I want to get into, I don't want them to leave the room, they're the people I need to talk to (laughs). So I think both approaches are really valuable, and so I always, I mean you can't strip it off, and of course I always teach from a feminist perspective, always talking about social and political inequalities and justice, that's always at the forefront, psychology does that, I don't know that we always even intro psych, just think of all of those major topics that we have to touch on, it's there, so just harnessing all that, and as they get to know me and as I get to know them, then I start to unpack what are we doing here, what is this social justice work, what does feminism mean?
And so I start in intro. I teach second year abnormal psychology from a critical perspective, where again holding both, talking about the mainstream model and how that's really liberating and validating and life saving for a lot of individuals, and we look at the history of abuses in psychology, which are legion, and we look at the critical resisting. We look at the history of the consumer survivor movement, the hearing voices network, and all of that, we do both of those. Their assignment is to

look at the reactions to the DSM-5 and explain them and understand them so that they're not – so they can go out into the world and when they're hearing the critiques of the DSM-5 they're more equipped, whether they agree with the DSM-5 or not, they are more equipped to understand what these debates are about. So I think we do a disservice to our students when we don't expose them to all of the activism work that has been done and if we just say this is mental illness, this is the DSM, it's true, and then they're out there in the world and they hear all of these critiques, they're not equipped to be able to understand. So what are we doing as educators? So I think it's really important that we do both. It's hard work. And every year I think, "Do I do this again?" (laughs) It's hard work but I think it's important.

JM: So when you said it's hard work, can you describe what that means for you? What makes it hard?

[Tape 3 00:09:50]

ML: Again it's the 'holding both' thing. Because it's so easily misunderstood. Because it's so easy for me to critique the category of schizophrenia and for people to hear that as they're just making up – careful of the transcription here – quote unquote "making up crazy." Or this is a choice or whatever it might be. It's just any little cracks are so easily invitations to dismiss and for stigma to take hold. So it's hard work and I well know, probably a majority of the individuals I'm working with are struggling with the very experiences that we're talking about. And so to open any critique can be heard as dismissal. So it's very hard work. Yeah.

LF: I was going to say, it sounds like you feel teaching students to be critical of psychology and to question it's assumptions is an important thing.

ML: And it can be heard as then we have to throw out all of psychology-

LF: Right.

ML: and we don't want them to do that either. So it's a lot, I'm constantly monitoring the class, I'm looking where the tears are, okay I have to talk to you and like (laughs) it's the collective and it's a lot of individual work, I have office hours right after class always, they're doing reflection papers, it's ah – and being able to honour both, again, I bring in a couple of my friends who come into class to talk about their own experiences of schizophrenia and of the diagnosis, and their experiences, they are very much rooted in the mainstream medical model, it works for them, and that's great. And we're not going to unpack that. It's how do we hold seats that hold multiple different ways of experiencing and understanding, and so by that time in the class I think students are getting it that I'm not trying to throw any of this out, it's the complexity, the multiplicity.

LF: And it seems like, at least in my experience as an undergraduate student in psychology, that perspective is a novel perspective.

ML: Still in Canada for sure. Still in Canada. I think it's much more mainstream in the UK and Australia and New Zealand. And to be fair, my colleagues - a lot have not been exposed, would not know what the Hearing Voices Network is, so if you don't know yourself, and can easily hear that as people easily dismissing the validity of the pain of the people that you're working with, of course you're going to dismiss that.

LF: I wanted to ask about your experience as a mentor and what that means to you.

ML: That's a lofty term. My experiences have been rich but limited in the sense that we don't have a graduate program at St. Thomas University, so I feel I just get to work so carefully and closely with them, usually one or two students a year as honours students and then send them off into the world and hope they do well. I certainly maintain contact with most of them, a lot of them. Christina Drost just defended her PhD so I keep in touch with them but, I'm only able to be with them for four years.

LF: I was wondering if you could talk about what accomplishments in your career you value most.

[Tape 3 00:14:13]

ML: Mmm, I think I could probably talk, I don't know if they're accomplishments, but about the things that I'm most interested in, which I think we've talked about in terms of medicalization and stigma, recovery from depression and the resistance piece.

JM: Given that you only have the opportunity to work with undergrads, in the future given the opportunity would you like to work with graduate students? Is that an interest of yours?

ML: Certainly, it would be, our university is exclusively undergraduate, and I love where I am, St. Thomas is really, I think it's been quite a wonderful place to be. Our biggest class, our caps are set at sixty. And at sixty you know everybody in the room. I know their grandmothers' names, I know if they're in class, and so right from the get go, I know them when they're 17 and first coming into university, and can follow their trajectory in those first four years. So that's really important to me and I love it. And as long as STU is there I will hopefully be there.

[End of Tape 3]

ML: I've had the opportunity to work with some graduate students. I've gone to ISCHP conferences for instance and met some graduate students who have said, "This is what my data's looking like, do you have any ideas?" And so I've ended up working with them, some have come up from Australia to come and stay with me for

a couple of weeks in Fredericton and we've looked at their data, so I've done certainly some work like that and it's culminated in some publications. I'm talking with some individuals right now about post doc opportunities. And so all of that would be wonderful, but as an undergraduate university we just don't have a lot of structural supports available.

JM: Right, but it sounds like you're finding informal ways to help them -

ML: Absolutely

JM: At different stages of their career.

ML: And ongoing work with students who have graduated ten years ago on everything from housing to negotiating supervisors to whatever it might be – analyzing data. Ongoing, well the relationship doesn't end when they walk across the stage at graduation.

LF: So you spoke a bit earlier about how you feel that there's a little bit too much infighting in feminist psychology and how as a group there needs to be more ally-ship. I was wondering if you could talk a bit more about what you see as the future of feminist psychology, what has been accomplished and remains to be done?

[Tape 4 00:01:48]

ML: Hmm, I kind of feel like "who am I to suggest where the future of feminist psychology [is going]?" Because you're the future of feminist psychology, you tell me where it's going. Maybe I'll just leave it with that. Not that I think that there's too much infighting. That's not my experience that there's *too much* infighting within psychology, but I think *any* infighting is too much infighting given the scope of the work that we need to do together. So I hope that we can continue despite our different allegiances within feminism to work together for a common goal, so that's a hope for the future of feminist psychology. I think it exploded a lot of categories and we need to and I hope that at the same time – here's my theme of the day – that we can both continue that really essential work and carry on together fighting for gender equality. I just don't want to lose sight of that and I think sometimes we can silence each other. I've heard from some students that it's almost like a competitive feminism, like I'm more critical than you, and we just don't have time for that [laughs].

LF: Absolutely, that rings true. I just wanted to ask what advice you would give to feminists entering psychology now?

ML: I think coming back to our discussion, you need to find your people. This is not something that I would suggest doing alone, that's why I think for me St. Thomas has been such an amazing place, because I can collaborate all over the university and have done and will continue to do. Having a wellspring of support in the people

around you, I feel – my heart really goes out to some of the students that I've worked with who have emerged and who discovered a feminist sensibility for themselves, and are going back into really hateful social climates without anybody to link arms with. I don't know what to do about that other than let's keep chatting by email and come over for a cup of tea. But we need solidarity for this work, and so finding it online, finding it somehow in your community – for me it's been ISCHP and my colleagues and friends at St. Thomas University that have supported me in my work and I've supported them and that just makes everything richer. So you need to find people and that's also going back to being very conscious of who you are entering into a supervisory relationship with. I see students being exclusively focused on what school I'm going to get into, and in some ways that doesn't matter. It's who are you working with because you are in such a tight relationship and they hold so much power in your world and it depends on how they wield that. So make sure that you have your eyes open and you're making very conscious decisions about who you're working with. Talk to graduate students who are working with that individual, can you get their time? Is it a supportive relationship, do you have people to work with, do you have colleagues that can support one another as you all are doing that. To me that's really, really key. You have to find a good supervisory experience and relationship and actually Alexandra and I were talking about trying to do some kind of informal network about pipelining feminist psychologists in Canada and how do we find each other a little bit more efficiently, I would like to do that.

LF: That's great.
[Tape 4 00:05:56]

ML: That's my new mission. (laughs) A pipeline of feminist scholars and just finding the proper fit, in terms of supervisors, you know? Not only academically but personality and all of that is important. So finding your people and I think doing work that you care about and not necessarily work that is fundable. I know that is really elitist to say because we have to get by and we have to feed ourselves but I am a firm believer in doing what you believe in. And somehow if you do well you'll find your way as opposed to misfitting your interests and pursuing something that you're not really interested in or passionate about or can stand behind. Because inevitably if you do that your work is not going to be strong. So I think those are the two major considerations that I would have.

LF: Is there anything else we haven't mentioned that you would like to touch on?

ML: I don't think so. I'm sure I'll think about things in the shower in three days, but I think the history of mentorship and supporting one another I think is really important. I've benefitted a lot from some excellent mentorship. Janet Stoppard was amazing, and then Jane Ussher popped out and she supported a lot of work that I've done and I've learned so much from her, and even mentorship from people that I haven't even met, you know Jeanne Marecek has championed my work in

completely unexpected ways, we haven't even met. So they're really taught me a lot about how you can mentor in a lot of different ways and I'm learning.

LF: And that support really sounds like it's living feminist ideals.

ML: Yeah, and it's impressive to see how they've done it. You know a review from Nicola Gavey, it's a piece of art. It's beautiful the way they've done it and so I've learned so much from that. And you know we're all learning.

JM: Can you describe what it is that you've learned from either Nicola or Jane or Jeanne Marecek?

ML: Their unflinching eye. So it's never that they're trying to be sweet or nice or "oh it's fine." I remember Jeanne Marecek signed a review of a paper that Sue and I wrote, I think it was the DSM paper for F & P. Either she or Nicola, who was heading the review process for that paper, and we basically had no revisions but a month's worth of full time work on suggested change. They were doing it in a supportive way but they really enhanced and helped click everything into place. So you can offer extensive critique and feedback in supportive ways. You know you can be, for other journals even if it's supportive and published, there's some meanness in some of the review process. And it's completely unnecessary. Who is that serving, how is that forwarding our aims together? So the support and the critique together, being able to do that, and being able to champion people that you've never even met, it's just another way of mentoring that is outside the scope of what we think of as the mentor. So there's different ways of supporting one another. Like your project is doing. This is solidifying and archiving and publicly valuing the work of feminist psychologists. I think it's essential. It's such exciting work. I hope you know how exciting your work is. (laughs) Really, when it first came out and I knew she [Alexandra Rutherford] got the grant it was like, oh my gosh this is such important work. It's making it tangible.

JM: I don't know if this is opening a can of worms, but you talked about that one job talk. It sounds like you have a really supportive environment –

ML: That was not at St. Thomas, just to be clear.

JM: Right, but I'm curious if throughout your career there's been like you mentioned heterosexism and discrimination.

ML: Absolutely, overt.

JM: Overt discrimination based on being a feminist or if there's any experiences you'd like to describe relating to discrimination throughout your career or life? Related either to your identity or your work. And I guess just, words of wisdom.

ML: I've been fortunate in that it was so glaring, it was just a glaring, jaw-dropping experience, and in all rights I should have reported it. It got worse than I'm even willing to say. It was actually almost laughable, it was just so over-the-top. We all experience sexism in all forms in our everyday lives that have mostly been a lot more subtle than that. I mean most things would be more subtle than that. I guess I just see it all as a process of education, so my banker for instance absolutely cannot understand why and does not believe me that I'm not going to be selling my house because I'm in a long-term and committed relationship. And every time I go and see him he says well you have equity in your home and of course you and your partner, you'll move to be with him. And nobody's asked him I'm sure if he's going to sell his place to move in with me. And we have an unusual relationship in that way, I have my home and he has his farm. And we cohabitate in both places and shuffle the dog back and forth. So basically its okay [sighs] taking the time to explain and do some education around why it is important to me that I have my own home and having to get very personal there. My mom was left after thirty years of marriage and that is not going to happen to me, I'm always going to have my own home. My partner respects that I am my own person and I have my own life. There are multiple different ways of doing relationships. This is the way that works for us. It doesn't make the relationship any more precarious, it doesn't mean I love him any less, in fact it's really been nurturing for us. So for me it takes time, it's always time, to sit down and actually do some of that education in that job talk. There was no room for education, I was not willing to give it energy beyond, "Oh my goodness gracious, get me out of here." And it was not a good fit. Thank goodness.

JM: Yeah, it's good that it came out there rather than after accepting a job offer.

ML: Yes, absolutely, and then they all of a sudden say, "How would you feel about being in a faculty in which we are all openly hostile to feminism." And that was also a pretty precarious place for me to be. I was just finishing my PhD, I had loans up the wazoo and not a lot of money and looking for jobs, I know there are people who are having to take those jobs. What hell that must be. That is where we need community to rally around. I guess it went viral and people still come up to me and go, "Are you the person who had that interview? I've heard about it. I'm so sorry." So at least it was shocking to other people as well.

JM: Well I'm happy you're in such a supportive environment.

ML: Yeah, it's a great place.

[End of Tape 4]
ML: That's something else, I think for students to think about. We're a small liberal arts university, it's not associated necessarily with a lot of prestige, but for me it's the perfect place to be, and it's not 'publish or perish.' I think that's something else to consider, is lifestyle. And you know, what do you want, how do you want to live as a human being in this world? You only get one kick at this can as far as we know, so how do you want to live it? And what different places are going to allow you to have

the life that you want. I need to be in nature, I need to be rural. I need it. And so I'm half time at the farm, and you know, so it's fallen for me that way that it's worked really well, but I think you have to take that into consideration. Life.

LF: Thank you so much for meeting with us.

ML: Thank you all. Thank you very much.

JM: Thank you!

[End of Tape 5]