Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Noreen Stuckless

Interviewed by Alexandra Rutherford
Toronto, ON
October 11th, 2012

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NS: Noreen Stuckless Interview Participant
AR: Alexandra Rutherford, Interviewer
JB: Jeahlisa Bridgeman, Audience Member
JY: Jacy Young, Audience Member

AR: The first thing that we have all of our participants do is, for purposes of being able to identify the tape and later points, could you tell us your full name and place and date of birth for the record.

NS: Okay. My name is Noreen Stuckless. I was born July the 8th, 1940, in Toronto.

AR: Great Noreen. So we're going to start with a question that we ask all of our participants in this project and that is, can you tell us about how you came into feminism?

NS: Well, it's quite interesting. Well *I* think it's interesting. I started university in my late 30's. I had been part of a reading group in which everyone else was a university graduate and I thought, "Well, I could do this." So I just wanted to start university to get the feel of university. I started off with my first course, a course in "Roots of Modern Man" and it was quite a good course about the Greeks. And then I took "Modes of Reasoning." And then I enrolled in a third course and I can't remember what it was, but I had broken my ankle and was on crutches and the course was at *[York's]* Glendon *[campus]* that had no elevator. So by chance I looked at the syllabus, this was at Atkinson, I was taking an Atkinson course, and I saw this course on women. I think it was "Women, Education and Health" or something like that with Martha Danylewycz and I just said, "Oh! That might be a good course to take." And that changed my life. She was a beautiful young feminist, graduate of [OAC] and she introduced us to things that we hadn't thought of before. I mean, I always had felt that men and women were equal and all that sort of thing, I was a tomboy and all that type of thing, but it was an eye opener. Unfortunately, she was murdered by her brother, who wiped out the whole family, and the course was finished, our last papers were marked by Professor Varpu Lindstrum in Canadian History who became a dear, dear friend of mine and also a feminist. I was introduced to all these different people, she introduced me to [Sheila Wilkinson], head of Women's Studies, who enabled me to double my major to women's studies and psychology, I was in psychology at that point but then I did that.

AR: And she recently died.

NR: She died, yes. A lot of the people *[I worked with and was introduced too during my undergrad have died]* unfortunately. Anyway, so I had this background of supportive feminists. But then when I came into graduate school at York here, I had Sandra Pyke, Esther Greenglass. Sandra Pyke introduced me to SWAP, Section onWomen in Psychology. So I guess it was very much of a growing thing, where you young people are introduced to it very young, I came into it later. But I have three feminist daughters and … anyways, that's how I got started. That's how I got started.

AR: Okay, well I want to take you back to the "Women, Education and Health" course. Can you describe what of those ideas that you remember or recall? What really grabbed you at that time?

NS: First of all it was a small class, the way they used to have them at Atkinson, I don't remember how many of us were in that class. And the idea was that first of all, and I think the thing that Martha did and in a lot of the articles *[she introduced in the class]*, is that they showed women's accomplishments as often as and even more often than women's problems. Looking at things from a women's perspective, things that women did, also showing shortcomings in that way. It was a very heavy course, we had two readings a week and then we had discussions and it was lovely. And again it opened my eyes, ethnically as well, culturally as well. I was brought up in a time when we were a part of the British Empire you know, we had this sort of idea, and that whole idea was Canadianism. But also then of the fact that feminism - I remember one paper I wrote was looking back at the early feminists and it was an eye opener. It was an eye opener for a lot of us and a lot of us were older. I think in our class we may have had about four younger students and the rest of us were *[older]*, like I was a teacher at the time, elementary school teacher. The idea that women aren't better than men, although I think a couple of people do think that, but that certainly women should not be penalized for being women and again showing the accomplishments that women had and that's the sort of thing I try to show in my classes.

AR: Well, tell us a little bit then about your trajectory into university. You mentioned you started off in a reading group, but coming back to it a little later in life, how was that?

NS: I'd never been in university up to that point. When I was in high school, you may remember this story, when I was I high school, our grade 13 that we had then, our guidance counsellor would call the girls in the class in and one by one ask, "What do you want to be? A nurse or a teacher?" Unless you were going to go into retail or something like that, *[this was another plausible option for girls at that time]*. And I remembered saying to my father that I would like to go into university but we were a large family and he had lost his job and couldn't afford it. So I became an elementary school teacher - we didn't need a university degree in those times. And then again, by the time I'd been in that reading group with that lovely, lovely group of women, I guess my youngest daughter would have been five or six, so I would have been 35 or 36 years old and I remember thinking, "I'd like to go to university." So that's why I started. It had nothing to do at that point with feminism but it was just a matter of going in just to enjoy myself. The first course I took, I think I mentioned, "Roots of Modern Man," was just an amazing course.

And I said third but I think my fourth course, I took with Martha. I had already decided to go into psychology; I took Intro to Psychology and fell in love with it. And then I met this dynamic young woman who just… she was friendly, she was knowledgeable, she was opening up all these things, so from then on I said I had my major. I called it a combined honours women's studies and psychology and then I went into graduate psychology.

AR: And just for the record, the name of that professor was Martha…

NS: Danylewycz. If you see the large sign that I think Sandra *[Pyke]* has showing all women over the years in History of Psychology, she's the very last one; she died just when they were publishing that. And Varpu Lindstrum who took over, she was also in Canadian History so that part of my life, the early part was not psychology. Now when I was finishing up my graduate studies I guess, then I went into the University of Toronto system through *[various hospitals]* I worked in Mount Sinai,the Clark, and Women's *[College Hospital]and* Brenda Toner, I don't know if you know that name. Brenda Toner was supervisor of my post-doc and I became involved with a whole group of feminists in the University of Toronto system, Mary-Jane Esplen, Brenda, Alisha Ali. A whole group of very intense, very fine feminists and I've done research with all of them.

AR: And I want to get to that because you've done some very interesting research along the way but let me return a little bit to the point at which you became interested in psychology. And that you realized with the help of Sheila Wilkinson perhaps that you could put the psychology and women's studies together. How did that come about?

NS: First of all, [Clarry Lay], I had done Intro to Psychology, but I did Social Psychology and you could not declare your major for a while but then I finally *[said]*,yes Psychology is what I wanted. And then I guess because of Martha, I remember going to ____and saying, "You know, I'd really like to do more in women's studies." But I was almost at the end of my undergraduate degree so there was a little bit of finagling for me to be able to combine the honours. I had to do a fourth year and I had to do some other courses in order for me to get my credits up. And Meg Luxton, very kindly, let me do a graduate course for undergraduate credit to get enough credits to get my women's studies. And that became so important to me. I worked with Sheila actually in setting up the Feminist Centre for Research, I was her RA.

AR: I noticed that on your CV! That was at the point when the Centre for Feminist Research had just started!

NS: We had a little room over at Osgoode, A teeny weeny little room without any windows or anything. And I remember Sheila contacted the finance department to see how much money we had to work with and I think it was $37, something like that (laughs). And we finagled pens and pencils and things like that but Sheila was absolutely amazing, never taking no for an answer. I think I was the RA for a couple of years and more people took over.

{9:29}

AR: Do you have any specific memories from that time, the beginnings of the centre?

NS: Well I remember Joanna Stuckey, she had started this before us, at least the workup of it. I just remember the calling of favours, I guess, that Sheila did, she talked to people and [got] things. They had an absolutely wonderful symposium, I can't think of her name from business… Oh dear. But anyways she was in women's kind of studies in research and this research from business admin, I see her in front of me. Anyway, they set up this wonderful symposium and had speakers from all over. I think it really opened people's eyes to the possibility of what could be done and it was a feminist symposium. Now I don't know about sociology but I believe that it was the first feminist symposium that we had here at York, a huge success.

AR: And this would have been in the late 80s, early 90s?

NS: I can't remember the date of it, I just remember we had it over at Osgoode, we were in the big court there. They had speakers, we had all little rooms and it was absolutely amazing. I remember I introduced again, one thing when you get old your memory is not as good, I can't remember her name but she wrote in the *Toronto Star*, and I remember introducing her and she gave a talk. It was lovely.

AR: How wonderful! So how did that kind of exposure to women's studies and all of the feminist stuff you were doing and then your work in psychology, how did those two things sort of come together?

NS: Well first of all, in my research, my post-doc was looking at women who had been in abusive relationships. I got a SSHRC for it, a post-doc SSHRC, and I was going to be looking at what happened after they left the relationship. That's the way the title looks. But as I was interviewing them, as you know what could happen in interviews, most of them wanted to talk about why it took them so long to leave. And so that became a major focus of that research and because you know they say, "Why didn't you just leave him? Why did it take you so long to leave" and that was a big part of it and then what happen afterward as well. So that was my post-doc.

AR: So can you recall? I know this is asking you to go back, but what were some of the reasons?

NR: Oh I know those reasons very well because I teach them remember in the *[Psychology of Women]* course. First of all, fear is one of them. No place to go. Now there are shelters but they are only short-term. For women of other cultures - language difficulties. Children, as a matter of fact - it's the fear of their children being hurt that usually is the last straw that they go. Financial, a lot of them if they already have jobs, they have to give them up so that they won't be found. And if before they were taking care of the family and didn't have bank accounts, it was amazing how many of the women had bank accounts that were controlled by their husbands. Lack of support, like a lot of family members and friends would say, "What did you do to cause him to do that?" and those that did support them would say, "We haven't room for you, if you leave

you're on your own." So there were all these reasons and with some just the cycle of abuse, you know, they would leave, the husband would convince them to come back, next time it gets worse and so on. So it was very difficult but what I liked was what one woman said when I said, "Oh, you're a survivor!" She said, "No I'm a thriver." And what she was saying was that she wasn't just surviving having left. And I do believe that term was also used by the Metropolitan Women's Abuse Centre. I think they use that term as well; thriver, at least they did. And she said, "I help others now." But the real sad thing was the women who did stay. For so often they'd leave and because they had no finances they finally had to go back to the abusive relationship. They had left but would have to go back.

AR: So tell us a little bit then about how you got hooked up with Dr. Brenda [Toner].

NS: Well that was interesting because… now I'm trying to think of the name, she had a person at Mt. Sinai finishing up a commitment. I can't remember if it was a post-doc. But she got a full-time position elsewhere and she knew me and she mentioned *[me to]* Brenda. And we went and had lunch down at Baldwin Street. And what was really interesting was that we were talking about things and she said, "What are some of the things that you do?" and one of the things I said I do, that I do a lot of, is scale development. And she said, "Scale development?! We've been working on a gender-socialization type of scale for a long time but we didn't have anyone to try it." And then some other things we talked about as well. So what I did was I ended up finishing that appointment at Mt. Sinai and then I was going to stay there but I got offered a position as a research associate at Women's College [*Hospital*], I was there for seven years. So that's how I got to know Brenda and the wonderful team.

Now I know it's different now, she has another job, but we had a team of about six brilliant, young, they were young I wasn't (laughs), brilliant young researchers, Alisha Ali, Donna Ackman, I just can't think of all the names right now. One was a nurse and they did all sorts of things. There was the Centre for Feminist *[Research]*, The Women's Clinic at the Clark, which is gone now, I don't know if you know it but a lot of the women-centred facilities are gone. The pain clinic at Women's College *[is gone as well.]* But anyways, this was a feminist one and we did a whole research on that and that was just one of the things that we did with that group and so that's how I got to know Brenda Toner.

AR: So tell us a little bit about the gender-role socialization scale that you worked on.

NS: The gender-role socialization scale started a long time ago. It started before I started with Brenda which would have been back in '93/94, something like that. But again it was just a matter of, they were very enthused about it and knew what they wanted to do but they just didn't have the methodology and I brought the methodology. Actually we didn't do it as the first one, we did the scale for cognitive disabilities or something like that. We did one for irritable bowel syndrome, that's the first one that we did. And then the whole idea of the gender role socialization - which was dear to all of our hearts and Tara Tang, she was one of the chief

movers later on on this one, but I think she, Alisha Ali, and Brenda were the first ones to start it and then I came into it. And it was just the whole idea of thoughts that women have on what they should be doing, what society and others expected them to do and how that socializes them. It was done internationally, they had the items edited in different countries, added items, took away items and it's extremely well done methodologically. It's used all over the place now; it was just published, as a matter of fact over the last year in a chapter in a book and I presented it at CPA last June.

AR: Speaking of CPA, tell us how you got involved, as you have been for many years, in the Section on Women in Psychology.

NS: Sandra Pyke (laughs). She's one of my mentors that way. She knew that I was interested in feminism and of course once I got into it, next thing I know, I'm secretary/treasurer for a number of years. But this is a wonderful, wonderful group and very dedicated feminists but *[they are]* also very hard-working, very knowledgeable. And I don't know if the other people know that you of course received an award and you were the speaker last year, it was a wonderful talk. Sandra Pyke gave a talk a number of years ago on the origins of SWAP, how it first started and that. But that's how I got started.

AR: How many years have you been involved?

NS: I can't remember now.

AR: Well, it's been a few (laughs).

NS: (Laughs) I was trying to think back, seven or eight years? I don't know how long I've been secretary/treasurer.

AR: Have you noticed any changes over the years in terms of kind of the folks who are involved, the ups and downs of the organization?

NS: I think it's becoming maybe a little broader. I believe more people are getting involved, it's a wonderful newsletter. The provincial reps, the graduate students are getting even more and more *[involved]*. *[We]* still need more help at the undergraduate level; it's a little harder for them. I think what I'm seeing more and more is the *[changes in]* graduate students' *[influence on the organization]*. And we have the institutes every other year, although I don't know if we're having one this year and they've been wonderful, a lot of work for the people doing it but very good. It's a wonderful organization and quite a good size one; I think we have maybe one of the largest memberships in the CPA.

AR: I haven't been involved as long as you have, but it seems as if there has been a steady infusion of new folks coming in, graduate students getting involved which is great.

NS: Along with everything else you have to do because as a graduate student as everyone knows, it's a lot of work being a graduate student and to be able to do this extra is good. It's very worthwhile.

AR: Noreen, have you been involved in any other feminist organizations that I wouldn't know about from your CV? You mentioned the Centre for Feminist Research here at York, Section in Women on Psychology…

NS: I think not specifically. I think more the work with Brenda, doing those sorts of things, the symposium and most of the work that I've presented at the U of T Research Day has been on feminist topics and things like that but not in an organization, no.

AR: Sure, sure. One of your other major *[areas]*, it looks to me looking at your CV, another area for you has been marital violence. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

NS: Well first of all I did most of that work with Desmond Ellis who's a sociologist. He was the Chair of Sociology, an amazing researcher, a very sensitive man. He and I published a book about negotiating, in other words, either using lawyers or mediators for divorces. And we've just finished a very large report that he submitted, I think it was in June, to the Department of Justice looking again at men who've killed their wives and have or have not attempted suicide and is that something that could be looked at.

So we've done, I don't know, maybe four or five articles and the book. And again as I said my post-doc was on that. It's sad, I just gave a presentation this last winter on it and all the publicity that's going on and it's not something that's going away. I guess I feel maybe because of the post-doc, the helplessness that women must feel in situations like that. Someone that I l know rather well who was in an abusive relationship, we got her out of it, got her a home and she went back, we couldn't understand it. It happened before I did my studies and now I know better why she did. I think one thing that is good is in academia *[is that]* there is more perhaps of an interest in it. I know there's a video I show my class called a "Love that Kills." Was that the one I showed? I guess you don't remember. I used to show another one, but a "Love that Kills" talks about a young couple, and it's a real story. The mother is in the organization against violence in a way and it was her daughter that had been murdered and it really shows that at the level of what I think it should be shown at. So much of what we've done in the past is to talk about things after they have happened and I think that with a lot of things now there is more of a movement to try to prevent things from happening.

AR: Based on your work in this area, are there certain policy recommendations that have kind of come out of that to the Department of Justice?

NS: Well, the one big thing for me is motivation for the abuse and I'm not going to get into this now but one of the earlier areas that I was very interested in was that whole area of revenge. And about the fact that if a partner is convinced that his or her partner has hurt them personally, a

personal wrong, they're going to, depending on other factors, they're going to get back regardless of the consequences to themselves. And I think when they're looking at why there is abuse, the motivation, if it is something about being angry and anger management *[that's one thing]*.But if they look back and realize that this person has a deep-seated feeling of wanting to hurt the person, then that should be taken into consideration in treatment but also in the courts when they give the person freedom to go back out into the community. Story after story after story of women who've said they're going to leave or who have left where the partner has said, "I'm going to punish you, I'm going to get you for it!" Nothing is done and you see them time after time, those stories of the women being murdered. So anyway, something I'm quite… (laughs) quite enthusiastic about.

AR: Well I'll invite you actually to talk a little bit about your research that I think was a part of your PhD research then.

NS: No, The PhD research was on children, children who were murdered or killed by drunk drivers and more the feelings of the family over time. They were compared a little bit with families whose children had died by illness or by accident. But I wasn't trying to say that either had greater grief, but whether it was by murder or by drunk driving, those families never ever really had complete peace. If the person, *[the drunk driver]*, was found, was put it in jail and they came out on parole… I always remember one terrible, one statement by the father of *[one of Cliff Olsen's]* victims. And he was talking about when he would come for these faith classes, these faith/hope classes and the father gave this *[statement]*, "It's just like having a scab that is healed over a wound and having it ripped off." And we all know that feeling. And I think that that's analogous to women who have been in relationships where it comes back over and over and over again. But a woman can at some point end it, maybe with support of the abuser, maybe with others, but with my dissertation, 20-30 years later there was still pain in families.

AR: I want to move you towards talking about teaching because I know you've done a lot of teaching and you've done a lot of mentoring. So can you tell me about when you first started teaching and what kind of form that took and what you try and do as a teacher.

NS: I'm trying to remember what my very class was. I know I did Psych of Women while I was still a graduate student; I did it on a ticket. I know that I taught Sex Roles and Behaviours which I teach at U of T, I taught that earlier on but I had already graduated then. So I guess it would have started back, if I think of my ticket, probably around '92 or something. But more specifically from about '95 when I started to do a fair bit of teaching. I did Psych of the Family, Social Psychology, Psychology of Women, Sex Roles and Behaviour at U of T, I still teach that, and my 4th year seminars.

AR: And which of those are your kind of favourite? Picking among your children (laughs).

NS: (Laughs) they're so different. I like them for different reasons. I love the Psych of Women, it's just that the classes are so large, there's about 180 *[students enrolled]* this year. But still I

keep getting comments back *[that parallel]* some of the feelings that I felt with Martha's class, "You opened my eyes to things I've never thought of before" and things like that, which is lovely. I like the U of T one. Now it's a gender class, just as many men as women, it's not a Psych of Women, so you do handle it differently. A gender class is different, when you talk about menstruation you also talk about the *[man's]* experience of puberty. It's a smaller class, 70 *[students]* with a TA. I love my 4th year courses because they apply social psychology; they identify a problem in society and then talk about an intervention to move on. And a fair number of them do pick on feminist themes; *[they]* talk about abuse and things like that. Not all of them by any means, *[some]* talk about bystander interventions and talk about it from the perspective of Kitty Genovese; why didn't anyone help her and then develop that into why people don't help anyone in an abusive situation. I like them all for different reasons.

JY: Can I ask how you bring your feminism into your teaching and perhaps how you deal with student's reactions to feminism?

NS: In which course?

JY: In any or all that you would like to talk about.

NS: It's different in all courses. In both the Psych of Women, well in all of the courses, I identify myself as a feminist. All the courses I say, "This is not a course on feminism." I don't teach Psych of Women as a feminist course, which I know a lot of women do teach it as a feminist course. I feel that I like my students to have grounding in the material, in the ideas of it with a feminist viewpoint. I use feminist textbooks, the one at U of T and the Margaret Matlin book I use here, they're both feminist textbooks. Now of course the Applied Social Psychology isn't *[feminist]* but I think *[it is]* in the things that I'm teaching. For example, just teaching now about gender comparisons and using the "Gender Similarities Hypothesis" handout, which is amazing if any of you have looked at it. And talking about the fact that the similarities between men and women, there are far more similarities than differences, or the differences, most of them, aren't very large. And I use that as a *[springboard]* to the fact of then why should men and women be treated differently. You see? And go at it that way as opposed to, perhaps in that context, saying to them, "The feminist viewpoint is…"

AR: So you kind of bring it in but you also kind of label it and give students an opportunity to explore some of the findings.

NS: But I do identify myself as a feminist.

AR: How have students respond to that?

NS: Well, they're usually pretty good with it. I know a few years ago I had one fellow who said that, "I appreciate the fact that you've said this, is this going to influence marks on an exam if someone takes an alternate viewpoint?" And I said, "If you can support your viewpoint, of

course not" and that seemed to calm him down. He actually became one of the best members of the class. You know when you have over 180 students it's hard to get participation. Some people participate; I think I recall you participating.

AR: Jeahlisa's good!

NS: And we do have some breakout groups where they have to sit together and talk about things. But I hadn't really had *[any negative responses from students.]* There was a very unfortunate incident at the other university, where I didn't know, none of us course directors knew there was something like a chat room. We didn't know about it, that the students could talk to each other, we never got responses back. And there was one student who came out about her personal experience and another student blasted her for it online. Anyway, we got it cleared up in the end but part of what the person said was, "I know the professor's feminist but that doesn't mean you have to be too." So I don't know what that meant but we did get that sorted. Fortunately one of the students of the class said to me, "Did you know this was going around?" and I took it to the undergraduate director. But I think the students know just by virtue of being in the class. And in my 4th year, again, no one has said to me, "Oh, why are you doing this?" I do have some students who say, "Why isn't there a Psychology of Men *[course]."* They'll bring that up and say, "Why isn't there a Psychology of Men?" And I pass it back to the class. I don't know if that was asked in the class you *[were in.]* And I say, "What do the rest of you think?" and most of them say, "Everything else is about men."And some universities have tried Psychology of Men classes that haven't really done that well because the students have said, "Well, we're just learning what we've learned in other classes anyway." That was a good question.

AR: Any other questions?

JY: I'll ask another question. You mentioned that you were an elementary school teacher before coming back to university, I'm wondering how much that…

NS: Before coming to university.

JY: Before coming to university, how much does that play into your teaching today, your experiences in an elementary school?

NS: What a very lovely question. Well first of all I was young, I was 18. And I taught for four or five years and I supply taught when I had my family. In those days, there was no such thing as maternity leave or anything, you had to resign; there was no coming back or anything. I think it influences the way I teach in a way. I think *[I]* was a little ahead of myself, not only myself but some of my friends as well, in the back and forth type of thing, forth and back. Although in those days you had rows of seats that were bolted to the floor and I think that I was interested even then in hearing what my pupils had to tell me. And the best classes I've ever had, and it's not every year, are the classes in which I get students who put up their hand and contribute something. Love it when I have nurses in the class. The nurses will sometimes call me out on

something when I give the wrong name for a condition or something. "Shouldn't that be called?" "Oh yes, it should be, I'll change it on the PowerPoint." But I think maybe that would be *[the experience from elementary school teaching that still affects my teaching style today in university courses]*. What they did back then is that you had two years, one year because I had taken grade 13, one year after teacher's college but then you had five years of close supervision. And in those five years, two of them you had to be signed off. The principal would come in every other week, the inspectors would come once every couple of months or something. So it was almost like an internship.

JB: I have a question. Considering your route to university wasn't the typical one where you graduated from high school and then went straight to university, did you ever feel discouraged, especially being a mother with young children during the entire process?

NS: I had the best of everything and I had a wonderful support in the family. My husband's amazing. I think you've met Wally?

AR: Yes, yes Wally!

NS: He took over a lot of things. My children, I think when I started university my eldest daughter would have been 13 or 14, she took over laundry. Not all laundry but helping with laundry and that. So they were very encouraging. All of my daughters have at least two degrees. Although *[they are]* in very traditional jobs. One daughter's the Head of Guidance at a high school, the other is a Nursing Supervisor, then I have my middle daughter who is a Senior Manager in the government. But they were so supportive and I loved it. I worked in the daytime at home, dispatching supply teachers over the phone and my courses were at Atkinson in the evening, but I had time in the middle of the day, so I was able to get into politics or whatever you call it. Like I was on the senate, I was a senator, I was on tenure and promotion *[committees]* and all this was as a member of the student association of Atkinson. So I had a very, very full university life, I'm very, very fortunate. And again as I said, I can remember, it was before a lot of the things, believe it or not, this was before computers, we did things on typewriters. I can remember sitting on the floor in our little office with one of my daughters, or two of them, and they were helping me put together references together in little sections and that. I had a lot of support.

AR: That's wonderful.

NS: I was fortunate.

JY: I'm wondering about your experiences perhaps with discrimination based on your gender.

AR: Gender and I was even thinking ageism too which is something that some students encounter.

NS: Okay. I always tell my students that ageism works both ways. We always talk about the discrimination against the older but there's also discrimination against being younger too, sort of in getting positions and things like that. Ethnicity, my family is Jewish and I certainly experienced a little bit, not very much, but a little bit of discrimination there.

AR: Do you remember what form that's taken?

NS: (Laughs) One that was really interesting, I was only about seven or eight years old. We went over to High Park, my mother and our family and my grandparents, who had been originally from Russia, we used to go over to High Park and have picnic lunches. We would get on the College streetcar and over we'd go. Our family didn't have a car, it was lovely. And I remember playing with this little girl, you know how little kids are and they had swings and that. She and I were on the swings, I must've been … I can't think of how old I was, maybe nine. And she and I had a great time. And then we went off to the washroom and the little girl was repeating what her father said and she said, "My father said that this would be a great place, if it wasn't for all these damn Jews." So I remember saying to her, "Well, there's a lot of nice Jewish people" and she said, "Like who?" And I said, "Well, like my mother and father and so on." (Laughs) she went and told her father, and her father took her away.

But that was minimal. I can't recall discrimination per se. I think in my early years there was stuff that maybe I wasn't really aware of. I was the eldest in a large family and I was very much a "I'm going to do it" type of person. I remember, and you're going to laugh at this, I wore jeans when I was 16, girls didn't wear jeans. I had to go to my brother's jeans, and I was slim in those days, and I had my hair in a D.A cut, do you know what that is? It goes back like that and you put Brylcreme, very short. If you see pictures of me, you'd never recognize me (laughs). Anyway, so that's the type *[of person I was]*. But I also wore little hats, with little feathers and gloves, so I kind of did that. But I guess when I was an elementary school teacher I kind of noticed that all of the upper grades and the vice principals and the principals were all male. I mean that's not like that now in Toronto, *[back then they were]* all male, I didn't run into a female. The first female principal *[was]* in North York, and I met her because I was doing dispatching at that time, *[which]* was way past when I was teaching *[as an elementary school teacher]*. I think she was at Finch Ave. School. And I guess maybe the sad thing about it is that I just accepted as, "Well, I'm not a man, I'm probably never going to be a principal." It didn't really hit me until I took the course with Martha (laughs). So I'm realizing things like that.

So, okay, now ageism, well I'm 72 and I'm teaching at the university, so I guess that's fine. I think I would have found it difficult maybe at my age to have gotten a tenured position because I didn't do my PhD until I was 56. But someone told me afterwards that York did have provisions for that but it didn't really matter because I had already gone into the hospital system at that point. I was doing all this work with Brenda and Mary Jane and people like that, that I came back here. I was undergraduate director as contract faculty and then now I'm teaching. I don't think I ran into anything *[too discriminatory]*, maybe you can help me with something there?

AR: It just reminds me, I have over the years supervised some older graduate students and I have encountered in them, in conversations, this implicit assumption that because they're older they won't be going on onto a tenure-track job and I've tried to kind of explore why that belief is there and whether that is *[a rational belief]*.

NS: Well, the reason that I was told that you should have ten years at the beginning of tenure. Also you should have time to be able to work graduate students, from MA until they finish, and that and also the fact that you are to retire at 65. But I found out years later, a provision that no one knew about, that if you graduated later you could go to 69 and I never knew that. I know that my supervisor, Richard Goranson was very disappointed that I went into the hospital system and that I didn't apply to tenure.

AR: What would you say looking back at your career at this point, you're still going strong, but at this point what would you say your biggest accomplishment has been to date, the things that you're most proud of doing?

NS: In my career?

AR: Or in your personal life, I don't mean to constrain you to your career.

NS: Well, I guess having three feminist daughters and having granddaughters who are very self assured and reaching out. My husband, I think I mentioned, our relationship. In teaching? I guess, I was over at North York General, my husband and I were going for something or other, I forget, and I was stopped by this young girl who was with her mother and she said, "Dr. Stuckless! It's you!" She had been in my class and she said, "You changed my life!"…Of course I was blushing completely red as you could imagine. And it isn't always that way, I'm sure there were some students who mark-wise or otherwise are not saying *[I am]* the best thing since sliced bread. So I know you have your ups and downs. I never read Ratemyprofessor*[.com]* , I understand *[my rating is]* good but I don't want to look at it. But I think that when I get that type of response *[from students, I feel accomplished]*. I'm very pleased with the publications we've done and the work we've done. Irene and a group of us did work on a group of Ethiopian women, now the publication wasn't the best of what we had done, but the publication was still good.

AR: I actually meant to ask you about that, about what that work consisted of.

NS: Well, that's a group that I had known from women's studies *[or]* Women's College. We had a whole big group and we looked at the Ethiopian women and what I had wanted to look at was situations of abuse. And what they found was and what we were looking at was what life was like for them, men and women, and what it was like here. And we got a very good feel for the fact of the changes. I don't know if it showed up as well in the article. We didn't get into abuse too much because I think the interviewers were from the community, it made it difficult. But certainly *[we got]* a feel for the people, for the men as well. Because in Ethiopia, the people who

came over quite often had help, to be able to afford to come over and they had close friends, they had all these sort of things. The women didn't work outside the family, the men were very much the providers. Then they come over here and things were so different. Some of the women had to go to work which took away from a lot of the men their manly-hood and this is the sort of thing that we saw. The adjustment that had to be made and I forgot what the book us called, there's a chapter in the book, "Out of the Shadows" I think, there's a whole lot of chapters in there about similar sorts of thing. I know of the classes, all of my classes, I talk about the influence of culture and that we cannot consider that what we have is the only thing in the world. I also talk about in my class about not making moral judgements so I think reading through those chapters and seeing the difficulties that people have *[are imperative]*. But when looking to an abusive relationship, *[not making these moral judgments are especially important]*, and that's one of things that I saw in St. Joseph's Hospital. I don't think they still have it, they had a wonderful setup *[for women in abusive situations]*, interpreters from all different *[backgrounds]*, 12 or 15 interpreters and they met in their own language and they talked about things because they can't go, a lot of them, to speak to a male policeman. Changed now is that most often in domestic violence *[police officers]*go out in pairs, a man and a woman, they made a law that has come from work like this. I know one of things - when I talk about this in class, one of the sad things, is the mother *[in this situation often]*didn't speak the language, the only one who spoke the language was who? Her child. She said, "How could I ask my child to talk about these things."

AR: I had wanted you to talk about your work with Ethiopian women and reflecting on your accomplishments.

NS: And I think as a people and as a media, we're very much down on people of other cultures without looking at *[these cultural factors]*. There are certainly cases where parents or fathers that have killed. *[It was]* said in the paper today or yesterday a mother who was supporting her daughter's rights to live western style and she was murdered *[by her husband and her daughter's father]*.

AR: And he's on trial, his trial is going on now.

NS: This trial has just come up now. These things are horrible and people are and maybe there is some empathy but without the empathy of the everyday other sorts of things that are going on.

AR: Noreen, I'm conscious of time so I want to do two things, one is to ask if anyone has another question that they would like to ask Noreen about any aspect that we have talked about.

So I will ask our wrap up question. Well, actually I have two (laughs), two wrap ups. Would you have any advice at this point to any people coming into psychology who want to bring a feminist perspective to their work, any advice from your experience?

NS: first of all, to be very clear as to what they do. Secondly to be prepared, one thing we didn't talk about, is maybe the backlash which comes in two ways. Just the word feminism seems to

make smoke come out of people's ears. And secondly, the fact that young, particularly university graduates, have the feeling that it's all done. And I know that in class when I show a video, and it talks about men's wages, women's are always 72% of men's. I have people always saying, "But that's not the way it is now!" Of course that's the way it is now. It may not be the way in the university, it may not be in the way in the union shop, *[but]* when you take all the wages, women still have much lower wages.

And also then to talk about the fact that when they're coming into the culture that a lot of cultures, now in some countries, people have it better than Canada. In Scandinavian countries for example, not in every way, maybe still not in housework and that, but they do. But then there are other countries where women are still fighting an uphill battle. I think the grandmothers who came to the United Nations a couple of years ago who were taking care of their grandchildren whose parents had died of AIDS and they came to Canada and they came to the United Nations and they were recognized. The fact that these women who wouldn't call themselves feminists who were giving life to their grandchildren and yet who received so very little recognition and support from those of us who are so much better off here. So I guess the two things of about just being aware of portraying feminism in the way that will be able to show what can be done and also just letting the younger generation *[know]* that the battle is not won and that we all have to take part in it someway.

AR: And is there anything that we haven't asked you that you would like to talk about?

NS: I haven't talked too much about my research in the Toronto hospital system with Mary Jane. What we're doing is looking at people who have received the diagnosis of the breast cancer gene and how this affects them. We just did some now with colon cancer and things like that and so these are some very, very important *[issues]*, recognizing how people *[diagnosed with cancer]* think of themselves. Not only how they perceive how others think of them but how these things can affect them, and then having intervention therapy and then *[asking]* "Has it made a change in their life?" I think perhaps I didn't mention much about that but I think you've really covered a lot of things. We'll both think of things afterwards, I'm sure.

AR: I'm sure and you're certainly welcome to add anything you'd like to the transcript.

NS: And the wonderful mentoring support, as I've mentioned Martha and Sheila, Sandra Pyke and *[other]* people, Charlene Senn, all these people who have fought their battles through feminism and who are so willing to contribute, to help. I hope everyone becomes a member of SWAP and can see that sort of thing. I think that all my life as a feminist has been based on the support that others have given and I try to give support back, so we'll see what contributions my own children make.