

Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Panteá (Pani) Farvid

*Interviewed by Amanda Nkeramihigo & Desirée Salis
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts
June 16th, 2024*

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Interview with Panteá (Pani) Farvid
Interviewed by Desirée Salis & Amanda Nkeramihigo

Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts
June 14th, 2024

DS: Desirée Salis, Interviewer

AN: Amanda Nkeramihigo, Interviewer

PF: Panteá (Pani) Farvid, Interview Participant

PF: Sure. My name's Pani Farvid, and I was born on the 22nd of May, 1981.

DS: Happy belated birthday!

PF: Thank you!

DS: Okay, so we're going to start off with a question about your relationship to feminism. Can you tell us a little bit about how you first started to relate to feminism or womanism or other forms of gender, those kinds of theories?

PF: Sure, sure. It was quite an early entry for me, I think. I think I started having critical thoughts about gender systems pretty young like maybe like 13,14. Just being aware that there was something not quite right in terms of gender relations. I sort of didn't like the way that I saw men and women boys and girls get treated differently. Sometimes it was much more like in depth in terms of like, you know, why are all the leaders men, man or why aren't there enough women here or there, and then other times it was really like very basic like, *why do I have to shave my armpits when boys don't have to shave their armpits?* I understand needing to shave your facial hair because it keeps growing, so that's a choice, but this doesn't keep growing, so why do they

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not? Just sort of things like that, just identify gendered practices that I didn't know were gender practices. And just like seeing the kind of sexism in the inequity or the unfairness, and a lot of it came up with like grooming, and kind of like social roles and then kind of grooming thing. I also think I grew up in a very, um, not just matriarchal but kind of egalitarian household of family, like extended family. Whilst we were Iranian and I was growing up in Iran, my grandmother, my mother, my aunties my great-grandmother, very strong woman very sort of formidable woman. And my uncles, my dad, other men who are in our lives were also very successful, powerful, interesting people. But they kind of all worked as a team. There wasn't kind of these hierarchies of all the men do this, or the men say that. None of that kind of stuff was happening as I was growing up. It was a much more collaborative egalitarian space. And so, I think sometimes there was even this disconnect between what I was seeing at home and what I was seeing like on TV or in other people's lives or households. And so that kind of dissonance was also something that

created an awareness around gender being a thing, and something being unfair or wrong or not quite right. But I was quite young, and I didn't have the language of feminism yet to understand it through. And that took some time, to about, I think, second year of university. So having all these thinking and thinking in critical ways about the world in general and I think a lot of that was in some ways really influenced by being an immigrant. So, moving from Tehran, Iran to Auckland, New Zealand when I was 10 with my family, four families. So, a subsection of my mother's family, two brothers and two sisters, including her and including spouses and children. So, it was a good little like cohort of the family but literally overnight I went from just being like a normal person in my country, doing what people in my country do, just life was normal, you belonged, everything was cool. I mean, we were living through the Iran-Iraq war, as an aside, but you know, you're hanging out with your family, you have a fun house, you have a pool, you have your friends, you go to school, you're doing great... Literally overnight, you move into a context and you are completely other. And it was just really jarring to be like I don't speak the language, things look different, people are different, people don't understand who we are. And, you know, I think starting to make sense of that by about the age of 13, and then I think that's when the critical consciousness was really coming into being. And then I think the awareness of gender as part of that was linked, an awareness of gendered lives or the gendering of society was a part of that critical consciousness that had already been created because of the immigration process and because of the, and I didn't know this at the time, but just being othered really early on and people, you know, anywhere from saying awful things to just you having to explain yourself. Yeah,

DS: it sounds like that kind of lived experience of different types of identities, the way that they would interconnect in your life really informed that development of critical consciousness. So how have you merged these values with your work as a psychologist? And what we're really interested in knowing is how does holding these feminist values that seemed to be really formed in these like early years in your life... How did these values influence your research, your

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practice, your work on policy, your teaching?

PF: When I first got into studying, I was actually quite disappointed with Psychology. I was so excited to go in, like many of us. I was interested in perhaps pursuing a therapeutic sort of trajectory. I think like many immigrants, you grow up much quicker than your peers. You become an adult much faster. And so, as a teenager, I was always sort of, you know, the sturdy one, always there for my friends, just, you know, kind of sensible and very supportive and I was like, I could work in this, to help people with issues that they're having. So, I got into university, I was very young! I was 17, maybe 17 or just turned 18. And, I took my first Psychology class and I was kind of like "what is this?" (laughs). It was like "How have you taken something that is so intrinsically interesting, related to everyday life, and made it dry, dull and boring and... not inaccessible, but ...almost like *undesirable*, you know, and I think it was just that kind of very stale "hello welcome to Psychology 101. We're going to start with how this is a science and this is an empirical discipline -which I am into but - you're going to learn maybe not even that much of the history, but just first you need to learn the methods, then we're going to go over the main, dominant mainstream theories". And I just was like, all right let's see where this goes. And I got to second year, and I was like, all right this is social Psychology, it is getting a little bit more

interesting. We're interested in problems within society and how people operate within that. But I feel like some of the values I had in terms of like wanting to make a difference in people's lives, initially on a kind of one-on-one level, it wasn't speaking to me how that was going to work. Then I think in second year I took a really fantastic course that I actually wasn't going to take because it didn't sound that exciting to an 18-year-old. It was called "Families, labor and love" and I'm like "ugh" (laughs). But it fit into my schedule, so I took it. Oh, my goodness: This wonderful professor, Maureen Baker from Canada, who's a sociologist, was the professor and just kind of put theory, politics, and a framework to a lot of the things I was thinking and feeling and didn't know what they were. So, a lot of her work was around intimacy and intimate arrangements, so cohabitation, families, labour, love, and moving on from the work that Anthony Giddens had done and in 1992, 1991, arguing that intimacy or inter-relationality and coupledom in life, I'm pretty sure he was probably talking about heterosexuals or otherwise, is becoming much more equal, much more egalitarian, as like plastic sexuality and women coming intimate partners and things are looking up, things are looking bright. And Lynn Jamieson and Maureen Baker were systematically showcasing through data how this was not the case. That there was still great inequity. I think he was arguing that women in the workplace and men are becoming these more equal partners, and [Lynn Jamieson and Maureen Baker] were showing how whilst women have entered the workplace en masse in greater numbers, this hasn't been met with a lift in men sharing the care work, the unpaid labor. And this is just obviously just a summary of the course, but really looking at the demography of inequity on a grand scale, and how it related to intimacy and cohabitation and intimate relationships and then the ways in which [11:45]

society discourses norms of love, what should be a family, what you're expected to do as a woman, because of feminized norms obfuscates or hides these inequities that we live with every day. And so, those were some of the things that were really hitting the right notes for me, so it's kind of the critical analysis that are looking behind the curtain. What is the dominant story, and what's really happening on the ground or behind the scenes? Then I think there were a couple of women's studies, gender studies courses that I also took that started to really unpack gendered relationality, the gendered world, you know, the different ways in which... basically, feminist theory 101, you know, going back to all of that, and really sinking my teeth into that side of things. So, I started to become really, really interested in pursuing that kind of knowledge and was looking for that in Psychology because I felt like Psychology should be dealing with these issues and offering us a way to unpack them, undo them, redo them. And so, I initially did find myself gravitating towards Social Psychology because that seemed like it was a space where at least big social issues were in conversation, and it wasn't so individualistic, you know, especially like classic kind of Social Psychology. So, I was going through this journey where I was sort of ... not like "putting up with Psychology", but just keeping on going with my Psychology degree but being really inspired in these other of science spaces like sociology, and women's studies, and particularly critical theory. I did some critical theory courses in sociology, like Foucault, Durkheim, [I don't think we'd gotten to Butler yet]. But those were the things that were really talking to me. And I still hadn't found a way to kind of merge them yet. So, I was kind of going through the motions with my psych degree and finding morsels of things that I really liked, and still kind of waiting to be inspired by how I could bring my interests into that space.

DS: Wow, okay. It sounds like that merging is really also a merging of other kinds of ideas outside of the discipline of Psychology, it's not just Psychology, it's very interdisciplinary, the

approach that you take. Okay, so then what did attract you to Psychology? How did you get into Psychology?

PF: Yeah, so things were looking grim (laughs). I was in my last year, you know, I was doing well, like I was doing great in all the courses. I have to say, I was very disappointed in Psychology. Again, this is not comment on ...we had wonderful professors and all that kind of stuff, but there was something about most of the approaches that just weren't speaking to me. And also at that time, I wasn't sure if therapy was the way to go. I think I started to get much more interested in social and political issues, and wanting to kind of see how Psychology can help us understand injustice inequity or things - for lack of a better word as a younger person - that just seemed unfair. And I think that probably, either consciously or unconsciously, must have come from a deep place of having been othered and be like, "Oh, nobody should have to feel that way. How can we stop that? How can Psychology help?" But so I was in my last semester, I was really despondent and kind of, sad, disappointed, thinking I really want to do

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graduate school but not in this, or not with the trajectory of where this is taking us. And then I took this course called [*Gender and Discourse* or *Gendering Discourse?*], and I came and sat in, and it was a course that Nicola Gavey had taught, created, and I think she was on leave, and it was Virginia Braun and Tim McCreanor, who's another wonderful critical psychologist in New Zealand. Anyway, you know, we come in , it's a final year course, a high -level course. We sit down and they start talking and teaching, I'm like, "What is this? What's happening?" (laughs) I'm like, whoa! And so, what had happened was that it was a course that was bringing in all the critical theory that I was so interested in and couldn't see in Psychology, a way of thinking about the world through a political lens, through a contextualized lens, through a social change lens, and bringing it into Psychology, but it's also gender and sexuality. Because what I had also realized earlier on when I had been doing the sort of woman studies work, I realized that I was really interested in gender, in gender issues and like Maureen's paper, I'm really interested in gender, inequality or injustice, really interested in Psychology but I'm just not able to bring these things together in a way that makes sense to me. Things like the ambivalent sexism theory, like been hostile and benevolent sexism, that stuff wasn't speaking to me, like basic social Psychology stuff. So yes, took this [course] *Gender and Discourse*, loved it, and I think even a lot of students, because it is deeply theoretical, and I think that doesn't speak to some students. And there were people who were going through the motions, and I feel like I was at the edge of my seatbelt, like "Yeah, this is great. Tell me more!" It was just...it really spoke to me. I don't know if it was the first lecture, but very, very quickly, I basically ran up to Ginny and I was like, "Hello! This is great. So, I am thinking of doing this and this for this essay, what do you think?" And she was just like [*gestures being taken aback*]" Whoa!" She was really talking to me really nice. So, I just kind of feel like I really almost latched on to her maybe a bit aggressively being like, "I'd love to work with you next year", because we go from undergraduate to honors then masters, and then that's the first year of your masters. So, I was like "can I do my masters with you", because I was dying to do graduate school, but I didn't really have a mentor or supervisor in mind. I sort of feel like I probably stalked her, or harassed her, or kept being very persistent. We had a few meetings, I finished the class, pretty sure I got the highest grade for the final (laughs). I did a really, really scathing take on plastic surgery using Kathy Davis's work. And getting an A from Virginia Braun feels pretty good.

DS: That's an accomplishment. PF: And then yeah, we started working together. My first project

was looking at male and female

sexuality in women's magazines, Cléon, Cosmo, that was a sort of small dissertation project, which Ginny supervised, which is my first publication. We worked together. Yeah, so it was kind of like, I sort of feel like I had found my place, and I was kind of off. And so, I worked with Ginny for my Honour's dissertation, for my Master's project, and then for my PhD, and Nicola Gavey also came on as a secondary supervisor, advisor, and I worked with them at the

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University of Auckland from 2003 until 2011.

DS: This is the moment that Psychology became something that you could do.

PF: Yeah.

DS: That's tremendous. Okay, so we'd like to know a little bit more about outside of Psychology. What kind of involvement that you've had, or do you have now with feminist movement, with feminist activism, what kind of feminist activities you've been involved in, so stepping a little bit outside the discipline and just putting some more of it.

PF: Yeah, I think because I was so politically motivated and minded, particularly with gender issues, like I think I probably spent like two or three years just being really angry at the world, at what I saw in the media, I'm like "*this is so stupid, this is so sexist*". I think that's part of the developmental process for many, many of us as feminists, you sort of have to get that anger out and then kind of get to work. But I knew really early on I wanted to be actively involved in something, take action, do something on the ground. And I remember that the higher up I was getting in my studies and getting closer and closer to thinking I'm probably going to pursue an academic career and being aware that that might not be as compatible with an activist's kind of orientational lifestyle. I actually remember having a chat with Ginny about this and saying, you know, *I'm just really worried that if I'm in academia, I'm not going to be doing enough work on the ground*. And she said, yeah, you know, there are different ways to be a feminist, and in academia, you can be kind of traditional academic where you create knowledge that's feminist or critical and that trickles down to professionals or into society or what have you, or you do this, or you do that. So, I had to really actually think about who I wanted to be and what I wanted to make sure is happening in my life if I went down the academic trail.

Another wonderful professor that we had, Niki Harré, who's a community psychologist, I think she also said something to me once that really resonated and I kept in mind was "*don't forget your role as a teacher as a professor. You are actively shaping or affecting young people who are going out there into the world*". So that is itself, that kind of like knowledge transfer giving people critical thinking tools about the world, that's a form of activism as well. It's a different kind of activism. So, I think, thinking it through, I made the decision really early on, even before I think I had like an appointment as a professor, that my approach to academia was going to be - because I was worried academia is going to be too slow, I want something that's more on the

ground active and can effect changed sooner rather than later. So, I decided this is going to be my approach. So, 1: creating social change through the research, and then creating social change through the teaching, and then being publicly engaged or actively

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engaged in the public realm or in the activist realm or in the organizational world as related to work or as related to movement. So to me those three things were kind of like the pillars of like how I saw my job moving forward and it helped a little bit that in New Zealand within the Ministry of Education - that's where I was studying it's where I got my first job - there is a invitation or impetus for academics to be a critic and conscious within society, so to be engaged, to be involved and so I sort of really took that seriously. So really early on, I was engaged with the Auckland Women's Center. I would do all sort of speaking, organizing, supporting different small organizations within New Zealand, the Women's Studies Association, the Women's Migrant Centre, the refugee centre, in any way that I could support the work they were doing, I would be there whether it was through research, providing student kind of internships, doing talks, doing workshops with women. So, some of it was really on the ground and some of it was more in the helping of the organization or with the organization. I also did a lot of early on work with young women. We teamed up with Auckland Libraries and ran a series of sessions around...I can't remember the name now...A series of sessions just working with young girls, like 14 to 17. At the time, it's a very post-feminist-y time, sort of raunch culture and things like that. So doing a lot of critical media literacy, having group sessions where we talked about women, men, representation, gender roles, equity, sexism...So, a few of those kinds of programs on the ground. We also did one in South Auckland at a youth centre that was linked to a library as well, working with young Indigenous girls who perhaps didn't have as much support in the home and spent a lot of time in this youth centre. And so, we met with them in sort of a participatory way, created a 12-week program of information topics, issues that they wanted to know about, you know, we kind of came in and go, *"hey, we're thinking we could talk about some of this, we had some focus groups, what would you want to know about if we had like 12 weeks to talk about anything?"* And so, they wanted to know about finances, drugs and alcohol, relationships, nutrition, all sorts of things. So, we created this kind of tailored program to have different guests, different people come in and talk about these issues and in a very safe non-judgmental environment, where we would provide what we thought was good information and then you make your own decision because you're an active subject that we trust knows what's best for them even if you are 14. Being really respectful of their positionality, not telling them what to do, like "drugs are bad!" But being like "here's the information, up to you what to do with it, and we hope you make the decision that works for you." So, I think the activism was very much like working with organisations, giving talks in organisations, going to demonstrations when needed, speaking at demonstrations. I actually spoke at the first Women's March in New Zealand with Ali Maul and... Jacinda Ardern may have spoken actually - the soon to be Prime Ministry. And yeah, I was talking about intersectionality, and it was the first Woman's March, because New Zealand is the first place to wake up. So, all those things like being at marches, it was stratified, sort of up here, visible, public, working with communities directly in terms of campaigns or speaking to their community about certain things that are

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happening or research that can help us understand different things like online harassment, online misogyny, to really working with communities through more of like a community Psychology perspective than the work at the university that we were doing with teaching and research.

DS: Okay, it seems very integrated. The activism with the academic work has always been really integrated for you.

PF: Yeah. And I did one other thing that I'll just add. I also really thought it was important for me as an academic to use the knowledge that I'm researching and learning about and engaging with and take it into the public domain. So, you know, going on television when I could, when an issue would come up and they wanted a psychologist to talk about it, going on the radio to talk about different things. Just offering a critical lens for looking at things like '*Why is everyone being so mean to Hillary in this election round?*', or like you know "*Is Tinder ruining intimate relationship?*" Like whatever the opportunity was going in and just really trying to offer a more nuanced and critical take that was digestible, hopefully, to a mass audience. I saw that as really important as well, distilling complex ideas, or critical feminist ideas, or just critical intersectional ideas into something that was palatable. It could just kind of disrupt a dominant or problematic kind of narrative discourse.

DS: It's powerful, it's really powerful. So, you have talked a lot about the trajectory of your career, the types of themes and topics that you've been interested in that have motivated your research and your work and your practice. Of these accomplishments, what do you most value? What are you most proud of in this career?

PF: I think what is most rewarding, particularly right now, is the work that we're doing in my research lab and working with students in that space. I think what's really important for me is creating community and having a space where people who may not feel comfortable or accepted or included in other spaces can come and feel that sense of belonging and community as they are. I think that's the thing that I'm most proud of right now. I love the work that I do. I love the students that I work with. But I think creating a community of students, scholars, community members who work in our lab. We work together on lots of different projects, but we kind of come together because of shared values. The shared values being that we want to elevate the status of marginalised individuals within society. We want to critically engage with discourses and practices that are oppressive, exclusionary, harmful to minoritized folks. And also bringing in people who sit within those identities to come into a safe space within academia to be able to do their work. And maybe not be as harmed by the academic process itself, have a sort of supportive space and also to be able to do the kind of research they want to do that's meaningful to them. And we do a lot of events together, we research together, we have a lot of public events

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where we present the work that we're doing. Yeah, it's sort of a very collaborative, generative, egalitarian space to work together. And we're researching and we're going to events together, we're campaigning, we're publishing together, all the kind of things. But I think that creating a community has been one of the things that I've really been proud of and love. And it took a while, because I couldn't quite get it off the ground in New Zealand. There were some resistance or challenges institutionally but once I came to the New School and to New York, there was much more freedom be able to do the work I want to do, have the kind of research lab I want to have, and teach the sorts of things I've been really wanting to teach and create. And really try and challenge some of the ways in which academia is traditionally structured. You know, I think one of my goals is also to really collapse those arbitrary but preset hierarchies within academia

without having kind of like a laissez-faire anything goes model, you know, but really trying to meet colleagues, students, others we work with, at the same level. I'm just not interested in those artificial hierarchies. So, creating a community, I think, has been the most important thing for me. And working with students. I mean I have to say that is actually the best part of my job is working with students, teaching students, being in class with students.

DS: That's tremendous. The community aspect of just being together in Psychology, it's so important to foster. I'd love to know more about: How did you create that? What are the successes of creating that kind of collaborative space?

PF: That's a good question (laughs). It's a really good question. And I have tried to think about that, like why do I do this? I think part of it is it's my culture, my Persian culture, I'm Iranian. I think we're people-people. We're always in community with each other, we like hanging out with each other, but we have a very, more of a collectivist mindset, you know? Your extended family is very much close to you and things like that. It's not as much of the nuclear kind of setting. So, I think that's a part of it, just liking to be in community. And I also think... thinking about what university was like for me and seeing that when it was a solitary kind of pursuit, it was much less pleasurable. It was just sort of like... it felt more disconnected. You just come, you do this, you leave. And I think getting into graduate school and also seeing the "lab model", group supervision model, modeled by Nicola and Ginny, we sort of had a gender and... I think it was "critical, gender lab..." God, my memory's getting so bad as I get older. But yeah so, we got together during the semester like I think once a week or once every two weeks. And having had that space where you had students at different levels of study led by Nicola and Ginny, sometimes we'd have guests, sometimes a student would be presenting something, sometimes you'd be looking at your data. I personally, as a first-year graduate student coming in, and having them be there and say a later \-stage PhD student and everything in between, I found it really generative and a really useful way where I got to learn from my peers who were at different phases. And then you sort of move up the echelon, and then other people are learning from you. So, I think part of it was also being inspired by that model that I was kind of trained in. [37:30]

And then just wanting to have a space for students to connect, because I didn't like it when it was a solitary process. And creating space where they can come and study, making sure that they're working on projects together, just making it more enjoyable and collective, supportive process, and having like mentorship, sort of informal mentorship, and things like that. I just think that being in community is so important to me, and I really think that individualism, or the focus on individualism and doing things on your own, I just think it's this really destructive. We should be in community as much as possible. So, yeah.

DS: This sounds like it really connects for you, and you talked about this a little bit with this idea of mentorship. Can you tell us a little bit more about the role of mentoring in your career? Who your mentors were, and what role you play as a mentor?

PF: Yeah, I think that's one of the things I've really come to love about being a feminist psychologist. I feel like coming up as a graduate student within a pretty large Psychology department where all the kind of sub-disciplines were represented, and there were many social psychologists, but in terms of like critical social Psychology and critical feminism, you know,

there was really only Ginny and Nicola when I was studying. And then I was studying gender and sexuality. So, you're a woman, you are studying gender and sexuality, and you're using a critical framework, you're using social constructionism, you are so on the fringe, you know? And it's so easy for people to just have throwaway comments in meeting rooms about like "Oh, social constructionism, whatever", you know, just being really dismissive of the work you're doing or "why are you studying sexuality? Who cares" or whatever. So, feeling like whilst you're really on the fringe, or you're on this kind of like very critical kind of radical side, having a space like the critical gender lab that Ginny and Nicola had, where we could come together like many people using similar theories, similar perspectives but also having Ginny and Nicola as mentors, so having a real feeling like there was a real solid support system and that you could come to each other and talk about those moments that maybe weren't just positive, or someone saying some kind of derogatory comment about the kinds of work you're doing, and be able to really debrief about that and kind of move on. And so, I think that had been really, really important on the ground at the university to have that community, other students as well that you just debrief about and talk about those things, and kind of process it and move on, not feel insecure that *am I doing Psychology wrong?* or *Are they right?* You could rest assured that you're making the right choice for yourself even though it's a minoritized choice, or it's seen not the mainstream approach to Psychology. I also think, really early on, through working with Ginny and Nicola and slowly getting to know the extended feminist Psychology network around the globe - so both Australasia, but the UK, the US, that was also really helpful to be like, right, you know, we're in this very big discipline which has a very visible, prominent mainstream status or approach. But there are these pockets of people doing the kind of work or have the same values or orientation that you do. So, you're not isolated, you're not left out in the lurch by yourself, and there are

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other people who think in similar ways, are using the same kinds of tools and grappling with the same kinds of issues, and you can come together and talk about those things. So, it really legitimated my passion, desire and interest in what I was doing, and I didn't have to second guess, and I'm like "*Yeah this is okay, it's okay that I want to do this*", because there are other people there. And also, whilst I'm a psychologist, I'm so deeply interested in and invested in knowing the histories of things. So, for my PhD, I was even looking into the history of feminism and feminist movements. And then looking at the rich history of feminist Psychology, and the amount of hard work our feminist grandmothers had done with Psychology to let us be able to do the work that we're doing. I just remember being like, well so this person had to be in a psych department that was so traditional, so male-dominated, so experimental, and they were doing kind of this radical feminist qualitative or sexuality-oriented stuff, and they survived and came through and paved the way so we could do some of that more easily. So, it was all looking at that history and being so grateful of the hard work that generations before us had done so that we could have a bit of an easier time and an easier space and a carved-out space to do the work that we do. I think hearing about the history and the lineage, and seeing the rich literature from the 70s, you know, like Rhoda Unger's work, people already questioning categories of sex and gender, the work that feminist Psychology had done on turning the lens on Psychology itself and challenging it to be a better discipline. Those were the things that I felt provided me with the sturdiness and the conviction and the drive to keep going, because so many people had done so much great work already and the work had also been transformational for a lot of Psychology, you know. And then the community itself in person. So, meeting some of these people at conferences when you're still in graduate school, and just also seeing how lovely they are, and

how open they are, and how supportive they are. And also, this sort of just unspoken mentorship vibe. The first time I, for example, met Deb Tolman, just so warm, so receiving of you, so there when you want to maybe come visit for a sabbatical, and just really appreciating that. Because you're really going above and beyond, and I think that's it's a real feminist principle that I also hold and, I think, has been so important for many of us succeeding. It's just having that strong support network. And the generations that came before you, and feeling like you are part of a collective and a trajectory and an academic tradition, right, and having that real sense of belonging to a sub-discipline that doing great work that you really identify with and want to see grow.

DS: That's beautiful. Thank you for that.

AN: You've been very generous with a lot of answers that answer some of the other questions that we have, which is great. So, I want to get perhaps a little bit into some of the things you talked about before, with your family and immigration, and essentially how that influences you as a scholar. So generally, if you can speak to whether or not, I know you've had mentors and that helps, I wonder if you can speak to whether or not you've had experiences of discrimination

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in terms of your ethnicity, even your feminism, these approaches that you have. And perhaps speak to any epistemic or academic, essentially barriers that might have created. And then perhaps you can jump into how you move through the academic world.

PF: Yeah sure. I think certainly early on in New Zealand as an immigrant, I started to experience moments of othering. So I think the more gentle version of that is just people not knowing where you're from, not fully understanding where you're from, maybe mislabelling you in terms of where they think you're from, to people, if you were doing something that, maybe you're like 11, you're in middle school, and maybe I was like putting something on my folder that spoke to me but wasn't quite cool in New Zealand, people teasing me for that. And one of the biggest shifts for me was in Iran being smart in class makes you popular, like you're popular. I did not realise in New Zealand that is not cool. So, I was just like doing my homework, being a normal student, still having quite like, you know, it was my second year being there, so I still haven't quite mastered the language. But yeah, I'm in my first year of middle school, and I've just done my homework and apparently no one had done their homework and then the teacher made an example of me going, Pani's only just come to this country and she did her homework, and you all didn't do your homework, and people are like "teachers pet". I'm like, what does that mean? And so that kind of thing and just being like, oh, okay, is this not how we do things here? I was trying to relearn kind of like the norms of the culture and kind of having to do some detective work of what's going on here and realizing that okay, so people don't do their homework, or they pretend they don't care and pretend they're not doing their homework but they kind of do. So just reorienting to some of the norms. That stuff was kind of challenging, rethinking how you're presenting yourself or at least in some ways not making yourself a target because nobody wants to go through that. And there was a couple of times, I think when I was a little bit old, maybe 14, there was some name-calling, like, the terrorism stuff hadn't come in yet, so it was other kinds of name-calling. I won't say it, but it was like, they got the ethnicity wrong, but that, you know, just some boy who was a year older, telling his friend "Why are hanging out with her, she's a this",

and just that kind of stuff, just being, just totally racist stuff. That was awful. And sorry, what was the rest of the question?

AN: Yes, so essentially, I'm trying to see if that also played in the way that your consciousness has evolved and in the work that you do now. You did speak to intersectionality and things like that. And I also hear it, when you're speaking about how you are with your students, it sounds like you are creating spaces where they can be comfortable and so it's more that how that evolved for you.

PF: That's right ,yeah thank you. Yeah, I think it was just that sense of the quick shift from just feeling like you belonged, you were normal to you don't belong and you're kind of weird, and having to like rework that. And then also I think about the age of 13 or 14, really kind of having

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that identity crisis of like who I am, what is this, am I like this, like that. And I think like Chris [Sonn]'s keynote yesterday [at the SQIP Conference, 2024] really spoke to me in terms of, you know, even if immigration is self -chosen, even if it's not by force, even if you're coming with a bunch of family, even if you're like relatively well set up financially, it's still a displacement and it's still a really, really challenging process. And I think it was probably much harder for my parents than they let on. But I think it was also something, you know, the age that you're at, there's a lot of readjusting you're doing, there's a lot of quick growing up that you're doing. And I think that sort of contextualization, and also having parents who went through a separation two years after we arrived, and some other kind of familial challenges, and realizing that things don't always go the way that you plan, and there can be a lot of personal and other kinds of challenges that are present while you're trying to study, do this, move forward with your life. So yeah, I think perhaps like having a bit more of an expansive idea that people's individual lives are complex and multifaceted and they're competing demands all the time. There are different ways in which their identity creates that, but also their context and just having a little bit more room for that rather than a very traditional, Western-centric, individualistic, success-oriented, or, you know, ambition, success at any cost. No, we have to consider the whole person. We have to see them as a whole, holistically and yeah, everything they may have been through that makes them who they are and, for me, not disconnect that from Psychology. I think so much of early Psychology is things that you learn then you have to unlearn and then relearn a different way to do it that actually is congruent.

AN: Yeah, that makes sense, thank you. What advice would you give to incoming feminists or maybe activists that are entering Psychology right now?

PF: I think I would say *we need you* and *go with your gut*. If you're coming into academia, you have to be able to create...well if you're lucky, you can create a space where you can do the work that you're really passionate about and don't let the system, the university, the discipline tell you what to do. I think you know, stay true to yourself, your gut, your heart in terms of who you want to work with, what issues, and what you want to be able to do. And don't give up. Find mentors, ask elders for support, create a community of not just allies but family that can be your support system. Go to conferences, meet as many feminist psychologists as you can. You know, I think the work that we do is so important, and I think having the next generation come through and continuing this work, and having it grow, and having it evolve, and having it be a prominent part

of Psychology, and Psychology for social change is so important. And I also think coming in and helping us evolve feminist Psychology. We need new voices, new methodologies, different ways of looking at things, different ways of understanding things. We have some really wonderful ways of doing things, but we also want people who are going to bring fresh set of eyes and even challenge us to do things better. And not necessarily in that kind of neoliberal, we're always going to get better, but I'm just saying, we want to just keep the work moving forward in

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the best way that we can and as it evolves naturally or incidentally or on purpose, yeah. But don't give up. And it is a little bit harder, it's always harder when you're a critical academic, it's always harder when you're a feminist. You are, by default, to answer a little bit your previous question, it's not easy to be a young brown woman who is doing critical feminist work, who is studying gender and sexuality. It's very threatening to a lot of people. I've definitely experienced that in different places, in different departments. It's just more comfortable for certain people if you don't exist. They just don't want to hear the work; they don't want to deal with it. So, I think that can be really challenging, and it's really important not to get isolated and have a good support network and maintain the conviction in the work that you're doing that it is important. And if there isn't an immediate community at the institution that you're in or a big one, know that there is a big community outside of that, globally and across the country.

AN: Fantastic. There's a question that I did want to ask earlier, so I'm going a little bit back before maybe we close out, but it has to do with your work and what we've been reading where you engage with gender and power but also with sex, sexuality and agency, and I find also what you talk about when essentially you speak to gender and sexual subjectivities, and I'm wondering if you can speak a little bit about that work, how you came to this specific kind of approach, and how you see it fit into this kind of critical feminist kind of approach in Psychology, if you want to speak a little bit about that.

PF: Yeah, being interested in gender, gender equity, very quickly turned into being interested in the micro politics and the macro politics of intimate relationships, because I could see that within the reading and doing the research that in very classic feminist work, the fulcrum of oppression, for lack of a better word, for women has been at this intersection of gender and sexuality. And I just find that mind-boggling that this is I think something at the beginning of Nicola's book or somewhere in Nicola Gavey's book, where she said, you know, to say that women routinely experience unwanted sex is to both speak the unspeakable and to speak the commonplace. And I think that juxtaposition for me is unacceptable. How is our society set up in a way that in our most intimate practices, we're just having these awful experiences routinely? And when you're looking at young women's dating lives, how is it that for them the first thing is they'll say "well, you know, you don't want to date a serial killer", or "you don't want to get raped or die". And so, this really, really high stakes game of like just trying to have some pleasure in your life or day you know? I love Carol Vance's Pleasure and Danger kind of framework or that book from the 80s, that the domain of sexuality for women is so thorny and it's so hard to just have some peace there, right. And so, I have a real suspicion/conviction that what's happening in the bedroom tells us a lot about what's happening within society in terms of power.

DS: Say more about that, that's interesting.

[59:15]

PF: I just mean, we're never going to reach a gender egalitarian society, and this is the and/or multiple genders, if the experience within the bedroom is so imbalanced in terms of power. And I don't mean that in terms of when you're in a relationship and it's like violent or something. What I'm saying is there are so many subtle ways in which power operates right now to create gendered sexuality to create these kinds of ecological frameworks within which gender and sexuality exist. There are power differentials, say within a heterosexual relationship. There are all these kinds of unspoken rules, discourses, norms, ideologies that men and women can take on and sort of act out consciously, unconsciously, within the sexual domain that's unequal, damaging, not good for the soul. And I think until we can fix that, until we can create the intimate domain as a safe space of openness, communication, egalitarianism, vulnerability, we're not going to reach any kind of gender equity. If a man, for example, a hetero-cis man feels like *it's my job to perform* and the only thing that matters here is an erect penis, and if a woman feels like *'I don't really feel like sex but we had such a nice time today'* or *'he's been working so hard'* or *'oh it's okay, I'll just do it anyway'* or *'he'll think I am prudish'*, or like *'I don't really like the sexual practice, but like he's doing it anyway so I'll just go along with it'*. You know, those sorts of things, and having more of a social and cultural space to talk about the micro politics of intimacy I think would actually trickle up rather than us needing to trickle down a range of different things, a range of equities. This is something I'm hoping to explore a little bit more, but I think we have a society that's so afraid of talking about sex and sexuality openly, honestly, frankly, without thinking that it's taboo or too sleazy or salacious. Sexuality and intimacy are such a big part of our lives and it's just something we don't educate each other about, educate people about, or talk openly about.

So, for example, young people are trying to just piece it together somehow from their friends, the internet, pornography, you know, and those are not necessarily the most accurate or helpful ways. So, I think in some ways I would see in a utopic context some feminist work, my feminist work, ending up somewhere where we could have a much more sexually open society and not in a kind of anything goes and anything that sexual is good, not just naively pro-sexual, but yeah, you know, taking sex seriously and just the shame, taboo, the invisibility, the secrecy and silence about it, you know, bringing it up. Any things that are not talked about, that's where some of the dodgy stuff is going. So, bringing it up into more of a public discourse, more of an everyday discourse. I think we've got a long way to go, but I think that would also really help us to name some of the things that are routinely happening, which are not pleasant for people even if they're mildly unpleasant. We know so much critical feminism has given us the tool to identify things like women's affective labor within sex, and/or women's even just the sexual compliance, the sexual coercion. So not even getting to the notions of sexual assault. I think those things, if we can fix those moments of everyday inequality, which are actually damaging to the soul and to the psyche, we'd be doing a lot better. We currently just have a book, an edited collection on sexual racism, and one of the things we're arguing there is similar to what I'm trying to say here, which is, you know, within Psychology, within social Psychology of prejudice, when we're looking at racism, sexism, we sort of are like, all right,

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racism is like up here [**demonstrates levels with her hand**] and like maybe racism at the workplace, and politics, da, da, da. And what we're trying to say in this book is *actually* sexual racism, which usually no one cares about, and it's like at the bottom tier of people's agenda in terms of how we address racism. We're saying, following James Baldwin's comment that

sexuality and race are different sides of the same coin, and we're saying you actually need to deal with sexual racism as a way to address racism. And so, in some ways, I'm sort of saying we need to deal with power relations within the bedroom to address sexism, particularly within a heterosexual context.

AN: Yes. Okay. [to DS: anything else you want to add?] This is great. Do you have anything that you think that you want to speak about that we haven't asked about?

PF: No. Thank you, this has been great. I just really want to say it's really important to listen to the body and your gut and your feelings when you're a student in Psychology. Something doesn't feel right if a measure or a piece of research or something doesn't *feel* right, follow that feeling and try and figure out why. Read more, talk to someone, because you're onto something and that's how the discipline grows. That's how we make it a better discipline. You know, critical reflexive engagement with your own research practices. You know, if you're interviewing someone and something's off or you're encountering something new, you're like, "oh?", follow your instincts, follow your intuition, you're onto something. I really think coming into the body trusting the body, yeah. There's the head, the heart, and the gut, and my gut has not led me astray yet!

AN: That's great! It almost makes me want to ask but like how do you even get to that point because university, at least in my experience, but I think in a lot of experiences, discourages that. It's like if there's no specific measurable way of saying what you're saying, then it's not real.

PF: That's right.

AN: So how did you get there? How did you get to "no, my gut is right"?

PF: Yeah, I think it had to do with also working with people like Nicola and Ginny and engaging deeply with kind of like feminist critical reflexive work that creates space for that. And also, really disrupting, seeing research that disrupted the narrative that even science or hard science is purely rational and a lot linear and logical on how, you know, like Thomas Kuhn's work on the philosophy of science, kind of being like, oh, a lot of it happens by accident or there's so much messiness that's cleaned out, scrubbed out of the scientific process itself. And so, I think we say that it's not part of research, we try to think it's not part of research, but it is. We come to a

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position in a particular way, where we're informed by what we've read, what we've seen, personal experiences. And I do think that a good relationship with our own emotionality is important. I really do think self-care in terms of having a good therapeutic relationship with a therapist that you're also working on yourself. I actually think it's one of the biggest resources that young feminist psychologists can have, because it's a tough ride and you need to be solid inside. You need to know you, your patterns, your responses to things so that you can also keep yourself safe from those arrows that come at you and recognize what your boundaries are. And then, when you know yourself better, when you've done your work, then you're much more trusting of your gut.

DS & AN: Fantastic. Thank you so much.

PF: Thank you.

DS: Thank you so much.

PF: I hope I didn't talk for too long.

AN: No, it's great. Just enough. There's a number of things that we want to ask, but we do have to stop.

PF: No, no, no. Great.

AN: Thank you.

END

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