Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Susan Nolan

Interviewed by Alexandra Rutherford
San Francisco, CA
May 23, 2009

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SN: Susan Nolan, Interview Participant
AR: Alexandra Rutherford, Interviewer

AR – This is an interview with Susan Nolan in San Francisco, California on May 23, 2009, part of the Feminist Voices oral history project. State your full name and date and place of birth.

SN – Susan Nolan, July 7th 1968, Boston, Massachusetts.

AR – Okay, Great! I'll start with a question that we ask almost everyone that we interview. Could you tell us a little about how your identity as a feminist evolved?

SN – Sure, actually, very, very young. I grew up in a neighbourhood that was working class to middle class; teachers, that kind of a neighbourhood. Very traditional gender roles, with one exception. That was my next door neighbour, an amazing woman named Beverly Bullen who was a professor at Boston University. She lived by herself, had her own house, and I was amazed that there was another way to be, other than to be a stay-at-home mother or a mother with maybe a part-time job as a nurse, or my mom who worked as a dental hygienist some of the time. Although, that's wonderful and I completely respect that, I always wanted something different and the fact that this existed was amazing.

AR – Wow!

SN – I had a dollhouse and I painted it to match Beverly's house.

AR – Interesting, interesting. Tell me a little bit more about that, how that kind of influenced you as you were growing up and your choice of career moves and training and education and so on.

SN – Actually, I kind of didn't really choose psychology as much as fell into it. When I was an undergraduate, I kind of went through a few different majors and then it kind of got to the point that I had to pick something and I had just taken intro to psych and it was fun. So, I thought, "Okay, I'll be a psychology major." It was more that I wanted to have an independent – I didn't know what it would be – but I wanted to have an independent life where I would have a career that… In fact, it's interesting too, when I was a child, I always announced that I was never going to get married and I was never going to have children because – and I am married, but I don't have any children – but because that's what's Beverly had done and I thought to have this life you must. Only when I grew up did I realize that she, in fact, did not have a life as a single woman. She was a lesbian and her best friend, we believe, was, in fact, her partner. So then I realized, "Oh, okay she just, in that era, couldn't choose to be out." So I think her choice was not to be single, her choice was to be in the closet to some degree. But all along, I wanted this life that I thought that she had. And I'm still in touch with her, which is amazing.

AR – Wow, so this is a really powerful kind of relationship then, in terms of really modeling your career trajectory and goals on what you saw in her.

SN – And she was the only person I knew like that, so it was just incredible too. I feel lucky that I had one person like that. But then, I always thought that I wanted to be a professor and I just sort of, I guess because I was a psychology major it ended up – and I was always interested in issues related to gender. So, I think I could have just as easily been a political scientist or a sociologist or there are a number of areas, maybe history. There are a number of areas where I could have done the kinds of things I wanted to do. But it was almost like gender and the goal of having this kind of life came even before the psychology.

AR – Okay, tell me a little bit about your family, given that you were kind of forging a slightly non-traditional path for yourself. How did your family relate to that or relate to you?

SN – I think at first they thought it was a little strange. The kind of feedback that I got was, "You can't," or, "You don't become a professor until you have a career so that you have something to go and then impart." So, there was a lack of understanding of how academia worked. And so, although education [was important to my family]– my dad taught high school and eventually went back later life to get his Ed.D and then went into administration, it was very, very important that you go to college. We were all going to [go to] college, there were five of us: two girls, three boys. The idea of graduate school I knew was, everyone thought that was a very strange thing. There was no money to help me do that either. I felt lucky that I got a fellowship and was able to do it. Once I started to do it, of course they were supportive, but they were just not fully understanding that.

AR – There were no precedents that they could see. How about your relationship with your siblings then, in terms of, you coming from a fairly large family? How did they relate to you as you went along this path?

SN – I mean, again I think they thought it was strange, but they have been great. My entire family came to see me get my doctorate except for my one brother who was in a wedding that day. He would have been there. It was really amazing because they were in Boston and I went to Northwestern in Chicago, so it was amazing that they all showed up to be there for my graduation. So, they've been great, but I do think that they think that I have chosen a different path. Except for the youngest who is 30, everyone else has kids and I don't. And so I think they see my life as a little bit different. Actually, when we get together, we really don't talk about it much. They're all doing, everyone's all doing cool, interesting, different things.

AR – My husband is one of twelve children in his family and he's the only one who has gone the kind of academic route. So, he says the same thing, "You know it's not something we talk about a lot when we're together."

SN – I kind of give up explaining that I really do work a lot, even though I only teach two days a week (laughs).

AR – I know. All academics have to contend with that kind of perception.

SN – And then I have all my summers off.

AR – I know. It's like when students see you on campus in the summer, they're like, "Oh, why are you here? You're not teaching." And I'm like, "Actually, we do do work in the summer." (laughs) Tell me a little bit about your training then. You did your Masters and PhD at Northwestern.

SN – I took a few years off between that, before I kind of figured it out. But then I went out to Northwestern, which is actually an amazing place. I feel I'm a clinical psychologist, but very research-oriented and Northwestern has two programs. There's one at their medical school and one at their main campus. And you're only allowed to apply to one so that everybody who ends up in that program really is research-oriented otherwise they wouldn't apply in the first place. So it was a great place to be a clinical psychology researcher and I had great advisors.

AR – You worked with Susan Mineka and Ian Gotlib?

SN – Yup! Ian Gotlib was my first advisor and I did most of my Master's under him and also I continued to work for him. He went to Stanford and, at that point, I had done some things with Sue Mineka as well. When he left I switched pretty much fully to her, although I kept in touch with him and he was a reader on my dissertation. I had a really just great experience there.

I noticed on your list of questions one of the things that you asked was [whether there were] "times that you felt discriminated against based on gender." The story that I often tell actually happened there and I wanted to make sure that [I mentioned] first off, how great it was to go to school there. I highly recommend it, but there was an individual in charge of things related to graduate students, and I believe retired. I won't say who he is. One of the things in the student handbook was that during the summer, graduate students get to teach. [The] priority [was] given to graduate students who had not taught a particular course before.

So, the first summer I was allowed to teach, I basically said I will teach anything and was excited to start teaching. They assigned me to intro to psychology, which was great. And the next summer I thought I really wanted to teach statistics. I love statistics. I'm good at it. I actually kind of finagled it to TA for one of the main statistics professors in our department and I knew I was prepared for it. There were two guys who had taught it, graduate students who had taught it previously, and I was friends with them. Knowing that I wanted to teach it, they gave me a lot of their material. They were great. And I thought this was a no-brainer. Only three of us were interested in teaching it. They had both taught it before. The stated policy is that it goes to the first timer. So, I requested it and I didn't get it. And they both got it even though they had taught it before.

So, I went to talk to this guy and he said, "Have you ever had a female professor to teach you Statistics?" And I said, "No, actually, I haven't and [that's] part of why I want to. I think it's very important. A lot of our students are math-phobic and some of the women I know are that way. It would be really great for them to see a woman teaching it, as well as a man, of course." He looked at me and sort of shook his head and said, "Well I did once [have a female statistics professor]. And she could barely speak English," which was such a non-sequitur! So I said, "Okay," and left his office. I went – actually, I ranted for a while - and then I went and did some research and, in the past five years - [things] have changed now - but Northwestern in the previous five years, during the regular years and during the summer when the grad students were teaching, there had been no female professors teaching statistics in psychology. So, I went back to him and, at the time, I was [in the] *Preparing Future Faculty* program, which was run by the dean of the graduate school, an amazing woman named Carol Simpson Stern. We also had a

chair with whom I had a good relationship. I went up to this person and I said, "Here are the data. I think this is problematic and I understand that I'm not being assigned to teach it this summer, but I just wanted to share this data with you before I went to talk to the Chair and to Carol Simpson Stern." And within 20 minutes, I had an email assigning me to teach statistics (laughs). It was that blatant. This was in mid- to late-1990's and at that point you wouldn't think it was that blatant. I credit being, not just willing, but also excited about teaching statistics, too for so much that has come to me in my career as a clinical psychologist who loves to teach statistics. I know that's what helped me do so well in the job market. And if I hadn't had that opportunity, it would have limited.

AR – Tell me a little bit about the development of both your development in statistics and also your research interests more generally and how that kind of developed. Because you've done, you've mentioned an interest in gender, that kind of pervades things, but you've also done work in depression, anxiety, and clinical issues. I mean, there are just a lot of things on your CV, so I thought, I'll just get you to start talking about your research trajectory and see where we go from there.

SN – Earlier on, I was interested in the gender difference in depression. Twice as many women during the main bulk of your life, childhood and old age being exceptions, twice as many women are on anti-depressants. I was very interested in why that occurs and also in the potential ramifications of that on a whole range of other things and, I guess, interactions, interpersonal relationships. So, I started out by and this is work with Ian and with Sue at Northwestern looking at just different cognitive styles, different interpersonal styles, and kind of what I fell into was the ways in which we perceive people when they're depressed. And so that's been something I've been doing for a while now. And it turns out, we are more likely to reject men when they show depressed moods, which I think is bad for both genders. If women are being told it's okay for you to show all this emotion and yet we really would like for them to not wallow in it because then rumination is – Susan Nolan-Hoeksema – who actually has the same name as I have - she showed that rumination actually brings people further into it. So, by telling women it's okay to sit around and listen to sad music and be sad isn't helpful. By the same token, if a man who is already less likely to seek help for mental health problems is being rejected for that, it's bad for him too. So I started getting very interested in that.

AR – And when did you kind of, when did you find your interest in statistics and that sort of methodology?

SN – That was always there. I loved it. I did well in it. We had a few of us that really liked it and we would compete in our classes to see who got the highest grade that time. It was just fun to try. I like it because so much of life is very kind of messy and hard to pin down. And with statistics, I mean, sure, it was based on probability and by the end of the day you don't know if something was true, but you can run an analysis and get these numbers and it's something concrete which I like. It's an antidote to all those other things I also like.

AR – It helps you make sense to a large amount of data that doesn't make sense just by looking at it.

SN – Or you see something in it because of your biases and then you use the statistics and suddenly it's like, "Oh, that really wasn't there," which is interesting.

AR – Tell me about your experiences now teaching statistics and in fact, kind of serving as a role model for women in psychology, many of whom are math-phobic or who used statistics as like the bête noir of their training, "Oh, I have to get through it." So, how has that kind of worked out for you, in terms of being the teacher of, mentoring these students?

SN – One of the things that I think makes it kind of easy once you get in there is that it's *not* very difficult in terms of math. And so, to just point out adding and subtracting, order of operations, and a little bit of multiplication, and maybe you have to square some things. It's really not, I mean it can be, but that's not what you're teaching in the undergrad statistics class, but really using fun, sometimes psychology related, sometimes not, but fun examples that allowed the students to, relate it to their lives. I collect data on them on the first day of class and then we use their data. I mean, it's nothing personal. It's just kind of fun stuff and we analyze their data all semester long and they get really into it. By the end of the semester, I often get people saying, "This really wasn't so bad," or, "I can't believe I liked it." And that kind of –

AR – I teach the undergrad history course and a lot people say that to me at the end of it too. "Oh, we didn't, we didn't want to take history, but, you know what? It was actually kind of fun!" I consider that as a really good compliment, actually (laughs).

SN – I got to write a statistics book pretty recently, a statistics textbook and that was pretty fun because I had a great co-author, Tom Heinzen, who has four daughters and a wife. He's also surrounded by women. His first grandchild is a granddaughter. So, he's surrounded by women and his daughters are very successful. He's very much a feminist and he was gung-ho to have all these − first of all, we have a narrative teaching style, so every chapter is centered around a narrative which is often considered to be more a female friendly pedagogical technique. And we have tons of what I call, some of them feminist examples and some of them girly examples. And it was just really fun to make a book that I thought would be much more approachable for women. And it's not going to scare the men off, we've got the sports examples in there. You can't get away from them. And again, lots of women like sports and lots of men get into my feminist examples.

AR – Exactly! It's important not to essentialize between the differences.

SN – But to have the wide range. Everybody, no matter what their gender, can find something to relate to.

AR – And to have that self-consciousness, though, about the fact that historically, traditionally, if you only pick examples that are more masculine or whatever, you may be unwittingly turning women off and so to bring some of that material.

SN – I think some women are definitely turned off by that, not all, but some of them, I think, are. What was interesting is when the book, the first edition, went into copy edits, there was a female copy editor and at one point she wrote a note in there saying that almost of all the examples were women, and that it was unbalanced. I thought we were struggling really hard to find examples of both men and women. And I went back and counted and it was interesting because, let's say, there were 20 different stories and 13 of them were about men and about seven of them were about women. So, about one third were women and I think what she was picking up on was that it was unusual to have so many examples about women. It was unusual to have any at all. And so we were telling them a story about Stella Cunliffe, one of the early statisticians that worked for Guinness Breweries after Gossett did. She was one of the early members of the *Royal Statistical*

Society and we were telling them all about her and I think at some point she thought there were just too many women in there.

AR – It stood out because probably in the textbooks she had copyedited before there had been none.

SN – I wrote this huge ─ I listed them all because I wanted to defend myself and I didn't want them to have to say ─ and they were fine, but I was afraid they would say that you would need to put more, you need to switch some to men. I wrote back this whole thing and they were surprised too. They said, "wow." And she's great. She's not the kind of person who would say, "you need more." It was really interesting that she did that, which tells you something about how you view the world.

AR – It does, it does. You've spoken now about a couple of examples where your feminism has influenced your work as a psychologist. Could you talk a little bit more about perhaps other instances of that or how in general your feminism influences what you do as a psychologist?

SN – My second line of research grew entirely out of my feminism because I am part of a collaborative team working on women in STEM - on science, technology, engineering, and math. And, actually, this was started by a man who was the head of our grants office. He had met me and knew of some of my interests, but he also met a woman named Cecilia Marzabadi who is in the chemistry department at Seton Hall University where I am now. She was very interested in these issues and he brought us to lunch. Which was really cool that he thought, "I'm gonna bring these women together." Janine Buckner, who is also in my department at Seton Hall, is the third member of our team. And we started talking about these issues. We thought kind of small scale at first: maybe there was a way to have some kind of a science club we're near Newark and I have been doing volunteering as a Big Sister. Maybe we could do something with the schools and the next thing we knew, we were applying for National Science Foundations grants and doing things ─ big studies. It's become a really big part of our, of all of our ─ and that purely came out of our feminist concerns for what was going on.

AR – Tell me then about some of the studies that you've done, especially in terms of how they relate to mentoring in graduate education and beyond.

SN – And, actually, that's the biggest thing that we found. Over and over, women and men who are having problems, they relate to not having had good mentoring, not having had good role models, leaving academia because you don't want the life of your advisor. And, in particular, for women, not feeling like there's any support beyond ─ I guess our most recent findings suggest that women perceive that there *is* interest in their work. And when we look all the things that go with it, it seems to be supervision. They're at the bench doing their lab work and their advisors very much hanging over them, whereas men are feeling like they're getting support, as well. We define support as all of these other things: connecting to the networks, helping you to figure out your career, and maybe taking you out for that drink afterwards to make sure everything's okay. The women are not getting that to the same degree. They're just getting that hovering over.

AR – You focused a lot on chemistry and I noticed a lot of your publications that I read have been on women in chemistry.

SN – We've expanded more recently to physics, electrical and chemical engineering, and mathematics. We started with chemistry because Cecelia was a chemist. So that made the most

sense, but we expanded beyond that. Even though we haven't expanded beyond the STEM fields, I know from all the readings that I've done that this phenomenon is across all of academia. Even in places where you have a lot of women, as I am sure you know, as you get to areas of that field that are higher in prestige and higher in pay, the percentage of women goes down. And this is in fields of humanities and social sciences where you have lots of women. So it's across the board.

AR – Do you have any reflections – I have very unclear ideas about this and I don't know if it's been well explored, but people keep talking about the feminization of psychology and what that's going to do to the field and that kind of thing… I don't know if you have any thoughts about that that you want to share. What you think about that whole notion? Again, I don't know what I think about it. So I'm kind of─

SN – I guess I'm afraid because in the past, fields that have become feminized have gone down in prestige and pay. And I guess I'm afraid that will happen, which is really a shame because, in a way, it's sort of nice that so many women have had an influence. It's not directly in my area of research, but I'm afraid of that. And the flip side is - it's not directly related - but one of the things that does come up in my research over and over, is that all of the things that make a place female-friendly, places that have implemented those have seen women do better, but what's fascinating is that men also do better. So the kinds of things that are family-friendly and all those things related to it, doing things so maybe the workweek isn't 60-80 hours, all of these things benefit men too. So, I don't think we need to be scared of making – and I know they're separate, the feminization and making a place female-friendly – but I don't think we need to be scared of all of these changes institutionally that would make a place nicer for women because it's not a zero-sum game. And if we somehow manage to tie those two things together ─

AR – It's frustrating because a lot of times I read studies or policy reports and they say, "We do need to make STEM fields more family-friendly and make it easier for women to be able to combine family and career" and so on and so forth, and I'm thinking that yes, of course it's important to make it easier for women to combine family and career, but what about making it easier for men to combine family and career too? Why are we always assuming that the woman is always going to make the choice or has to make that balance? I find that a bit frustrating and I think it's really refreshing and maybe really progressive to kind of say "Look this is happening to everybody."

SN – Although there are still structural issues, even if it's there for everybody, we still have a world in which the woman is more likely ─ a recent study found that even now among graduate student couples, they're both getting PhDs, but if the kids is sick, it's the wife who is the one taking care of the child. So those are issues beyond it, but nonetheless we have more and more men in our studies who are saying, "I don't want the life of my professor. I want to have a balanced life. I want to have children. I want to be there for them." More and more men are saying this. So, it is something I think benefits everybody and I think that's also less scary if the administration is overwhelmingly male in a given institution. It's less scary to them if you can say this is helping everybody.

AR – Tell me, moving on to a slightly more personal level, tell me a little bit about how you've been able to kind of negotiate the personal and the professional career and the family life in your own life.

SN – I guess I'm just really lucky to have a husband who's amazingly supportive and we have an incredibly egalitarian relationship in fact. I probably would even say I get the best end of things because he works overseas for many years doing development work in postwar zones. We met, actually, after 9/11, when his agency sent him to New York City and we connected through old friends. I met him through them and then he went back overseas. So, eventually to be together he had to give up his career and he did and he came back. And he went back to graduate school and got a second bachelor's degree to switch careers and be here. And we've talked about if I were to leave Seton Hall someday for another opportunity, he'd be very willing to relocate. So I've really felt lucky for what he does. He's very able to move. Also, the second degree that he just got was at Columbia University and it's called Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences. So, I've kind of been pulling him in, in terms of, because I'm just so excited about it. He's always had that sort of way of approaching the world, analytically, mathematically. He's very good at it ─ the son of a math professor.

Then, on the other end, I've always been sort of interested in international things, though never as explicitly until I met him. We have a house in Bosnia we go to every summer. And my work has started to look beyond our borders and then that has led to my interest in this position as one of the American Psychological Association representatives to the United Nations. So, our interests are actually kind of merging and we have a very long-term goal: 15, 20 years out, of doing some overseas consulting together on a social development project. It's just fun to think about. So, I've been really lucky. I don't feel that I have to navigate a minefield. What I do in my work, I enjoy doing. The kind of things that I read just for fun… so much of my life just overlaps…it's…

AR – It's exciting that you might eventually be able to collaborate and do some things together.

SN – Yeah, that gives us the freedom to live in different places. Where most of the time it is just one person and a trailing spouse, traveling gets tricky, but if we're marketing ourselves as a team, we'll take on a consulting project somewhere.

AR – Tell me, you've mentioned, you've brought it up and I was going to ask about it: your emerging and developing interest in international issues in psychology. You've done some work in internationalizing the undergraduate psychology curriculum. Could you tell me a little bit about that? How does that evolve and how do you see that developing in psychology in terms of the curriculum?

SN – Actually, the American Council on Education has an internationalization laboratory program where each year there's a cohort of schools. Seton Hall is part of the more recent cohorts and I was on the committee. That's more broadly undergraduate education generally, but then I was at the most recent APA leadership conference on internationalizing the psychology curriculum and I brought back all of these ideas that I have been talking about for a while to my department and everyone has been really excited. I just taught International Psychology this spring as a special topics course, but I also got approval from all the different levels to have it be a regular psychology course and have it count towards the Arts and Sciences core in behavioural sciences, which is great. I'm thrilled about that.

It was really amazing teaching that class because, as you can imagine, there are so many intersections with issues related to gender and culture and race and class. I mean, you name it. Many of students were like, "Wow, I never thought about this before," and "Why don't we learn about this?" It was really, really fun. So, I'm hoping to teach it abroad, actually, maybe next

summer. I've been connecting with our study abroad office and I got to do a site visit to Costa Rica where I can learn about the study abroad programs there. Latin America is one of those areas that is very interesting in terms of psychology. The Middle East would be another amazing area. I'm just getting excited about it.

AR – And you just started being, as you just said, the UN representative from the APA.

SN – Right, there's a team of us. Florence Denmark, of course, one of the founding mothers of Psychology of Women, is the main representative. Then there's a team of the rest of us: Deanna Chitayat**,** Janet Sigal**,** Sherri Dingman, and myself, along with two associate representatives, Norman Simon and Neal Rubin. And we have a team of interns. So, there's a group of us. We go every Thursday and we have a meeting as a group once a month. We can join different committees that are of interest to us. I've joined a couple including the Committee on the Status of Women, Mental Health, and Social Sustainable Development.

AR – That's great and your proximity to New York helps with that.

SN – It has to. It's a requirement. There's some mileage restriction (laughs), but for me it's easy -from Jersey City I just hop on the subway. I mean, it happens that they're [the UN team] mostly women. It used to be more men. It's just that at the moment it happens to be mostly women. They're so dynamic. Several of them are retired. I hate even that they say that. They're working more than I am (laughs).

AR – I meet all these retired psychologists, and I'm like, "I'm sorry, you're not retired." (laughs)

SN – They're really wonderful and they've been great. Sherri and I are the new ones. They have been really great at mentoring us and helping us to figure out just where things are on an enormous campus.

AR – Tell me about your role as a mentor to students. How do you use what you know and the experiences you had about mentoring in your role as a mentor?

SN – Actually I was thinking about this specifically for this interview. What I sort of realized is that for me, it's just mentoring is not an activity that you do at a certain time. It's just a way of living. I had wonderful mentors, many women and men as well. Some of them reached out to me, but in many cases it was somebody I admired and just sought out. There have been several points in my life where I just said, "Would you talk to me about this?"

There was a point where I was living in Paducah, Kentucky. I was writing my dissertation and the nearest point was Vanderbilt, which was just a couple hours away. I reached out to Judy Garber who had given a talk at Northwestern and I had met only once. I said, "Can I do something so that I have a connection somewhere?" The next thing you know, she had hired me half time to do data crunching. I had a lot of points in my life where I reached out and found people just by saying, "can you do this for me?" By the same token, anytime I find something, I always try to think of who would this be interesting to. This is a scholarship opportunity and would work for so-and-so. Here is a place where I can pull somebody in and she should be presenting this as a poster. I think it's just a mindset that I've benefited from and I just do it automatically.

29:15-29:16

AR – Do you have any advice for women who are going into psychology, especially for feminist women who are kind of coming into the field? Do you have any advice for them as they negotiate their way through this career or through this discipline?

SN – I think absolutely find mentors. I think people sort of wait for it to happen and I think that's a mistake because it might not happen. If you reach out, you might get rejected. I have been. I have had people saying, "Oh sure, that has never happened." That's fine, but you have nothing to lose. So, find your own mentors. And the other thing is support groups. Find like-minded people whether or not it's a group of women or a mixed group. For me, my support group cohorts have always been co-ed. That's been great for me, but finding other people you can… everyone's going to have a horrible time. I remember in grad school, there were four of us in the clinical psychology program at Northwestern. We all went through a period of wanting to drop out of grad school separately and that was great (laughs). If we had done it at the same time, we'd be gone. We very explicitly supported each other. If there was an area that one of us wasn't as good at, and we all had those areas, we would all pull along in that area. I'm still in touch with my cohort, not constantly, but I know where they all are. One of them I talk to very frequently.

AR – Speaking of graduate school again, you did do clinical training. Do you still do clinical work?

SN – I never intended to be a therapist. I was interested in this mental illness component, the stigma, the interpersonal stuff. I was so naïve. My most recent job before graduate school was at Memorial Hospital working on the depression research unit with psychiatrists who were great. But I didn't really have anybody telling me what to apply for. In fact, if I did it again I probably wouldn't do clinical because I didn't really understand how you could do psychopathology research that wouldn't involve the clinical training. I guess I'm glad I did it because I learned a lot from being a therapist. I have enormous respect for people who do that. It's incredibly difficult work and incredibly important work. Also, I think it makes it easier for me to understand mental illness, having being a therapist and working with people with so many different kinds of mental illness. I think it was good for me. I only did it because I thought, "Well, if I'm going to study depression I need to go into a clinical psychology program."

AR – It is true that unless you have someone from the beginning kind of directing you, you really don't know. Clinical often seems like a logical choice for people because that's what they think of when they think about psychology, but they don't realize that there are lots of other paths, lots of other options. I find that with students I've mentored that when I start talking them, "Maybe if they can do community psychology, or, maybe if you're looking at structural stuff, there are lots of other ways to intervene and to apply psychology that are not just clinical." And they're like, "Really?" So, it's kind of fun to open their eyes.

SN – It was shocking to me to discover there were social psychologists doing similar work to what I was doing. I have no regrets. I had an amazing experience. I loved being in graduate school. I loved being surrounded by other people who were interested in similar things. I really loved it. I would have stayed in graduate school had it paid better.

AR – (laughs) That ultimately is what gets us all out. It's like, "I need to make a living now." Let me ask you now some bigger questions. I'm asking you to reflect on your experiences so far in the field. When you look at feminism and psychology or feminist psychology, or even say, something more general, like just gender and psychology, where do you think feminism has

made its biggest inroads and where do you think the challenges still lie in terms of where we need to go?

SN – I think that the biggest inroad is that it's now considered not odd or bizarre for women to be anywhere. Thinking about psychology, some of the areas have the, even the portions, like neuroscience, it's not considered odd if you go to a talk and the neuroscientist who is speaking is a woman. It's not surprising anymore. That said, I think we need to then cement those gains by getting – I want it to be more proportional, because the places now where there are fewer women, again are the places with there is lower prestige or pay. So that's what I would like to see happen.

AR – How do we get more women, because this is your area of research, how do we get more women into those areas of psychology, areas like neuroscience, like quantitative, even? How do we apply what you know from your research in psychology to get women into those fields?

SN – I honestly think some of it has to be at an institutional level in terms of just making it possible. I think a lot of people see some of these fields as more difficult, more time consuming. So, making it seem do-able, putting funding there. Actually, the symposium that I co-chaired yesterday with Janine Buckner, we, the group of us who were part of that symposium had a drink afterwards so we could talk about exactly where we want to go from here with the research we are doing. Mary Ann Mason was talking about what she did when she was Graduate Dean at Berkeley and how she made all these institutional changes. For example, this sounds so small, but it's so huge, enabling graduate students to take paid maternity leave, which is now becoming… it [Berkeley] was one of the first places. If a road seems harder and people opt off of it for a reason – and these ones, neuroscience and quantitative, they appear, are perceived to be harder – if we can make it seem easier to do it, I think that would start to make a difference.

There was a study that was done where we were working with a group called the Progress Group, which is made up of prominent female chemists. We were their evaluators to start with, but we got more involved in their work and one of the things they talked about was that if you require a chemistry department or a physics department or whatever to have at least one woman come, you normally would bring three people to campus for a job. If you say we'll pay for the fourth, but it has to be a woman, you have to have her, then they are much more likely to hire because if you *have* to bring a woman on campus, you're going to bring the best one there is. Shockingly sometimes, she comes to campus and she's going to be the best person for the job. Very specific. It needs to come from the top.

We've done a lot. I mean, the women from the lower levels have done a lot. I've, so far, had small leadership positions, but I was director of Women's Studies at Seton Hall for a while. I was Associate Dean for Graduate Studies for a couple years and now I'm a Chair of my department. Being in those roles, in very tiny ways, you can make changes. You've got the power to make changes, but, again, my powers were very limited. But even with my very limited power, it was amazing to see your can make changes. I think we need more women. The woman who hired me, our former Dean at Seton Hall, Molly Smith, she's the one who pulled me as Associate Dean. She's now going on to be president of Manhattanville. She's amazing. So, women like Molly, she comes from an English background – actually several of my mentors were outside psychology – but Molly, she's very forward-thinking, very creative thinking, and I'm thrilled she's going to be a college president. So the more we have people like that…

AR – I'm excited. I have a colleague at Manhattanville which is kind of why I perked up. She's in psychology, Robin Cautin, C-a-u-t-i-n. She talked to me a little bit the last time I saw her about some of the difficulties at Manhattanville has had in terms of the administration. She was so thrilled that they were getting a new president. So that's really neat.

SN – Molly's really great.

AR – That's great. Tell me a little bit about your experience in administration because I've noticed you've had several positions now, ones that you have just listed. So tell me how that's been. You said that it was nice because it has put you in a situation where you can make some changes. How have you felt in terms of how you've been received as an administrator and what your experience has been like?

SN – So this is the part where I have to… (laughs)

AR – Well, it's up to you. You can take a moment to decide how you'd like to put it, or not.

SN – Okay, in terms of women's studies, when I got to Seton Hall, the director at the time was a woman named Tracy Gottlieb. She came from a communications background and she went on to be dean of freshman. I'd been working with her and she was the one who recommended me to the dean. Actually, that was a really enjoyable experience because I got to meet lots of women, and a few men as well, who were on the women's studies faculty and that was great. The associate dean is a weirder position. Molly had left to become provost when I came in. The dean there now is great, but I'm much more hands off. I was brand new so I was learning the ropes.

So that was one of those things that was tricky to have been brought in by somebody who was understanding that I was very new. Again, he's great. I just felt a lot of the time that the things I wanted to do, it was harder to do without some kind of structure. I loved working with the directors of graduate studies and the graduate students. In our dean's office, there's a great group of people there, including our dean who's great. But the reason that I went back to my department is there were several people, a number of people in our department, who wanted a new chair after many, many years. We had a chair for 24 years, and I was the one willing to do it. I knew that that department, you know, was ready for a change, so we had an election. So, for me, being in the dean's office across campus, it was a little bit easier to be a challenger in that context. We've done a huge curriculum change over the past year that was begun under our previous chair and continued under me. We're using the APA guidelines to make sure we're – I guess they were using the old ones, but there have been so many changes in the field, so it's been a really fun year. My colleagues are really supportive. I think my leadership style is more collaborative. We've really sat down a lot and really been able to work on...

AR – Sounds good. I wanted to ask you know about your experience in women's studies because I saw that you were the Director of the Centre of Women's Studies at Seton Hall and that you have a lot of collaborators, or you've gotten to know people in other disciplines, and so on. So tell me a little bit about that experience.

SN – Actually that led to a few collaborations, including with the English department. They ran a writing across the curriculum program that I got involved with and we ended up publishing and presenting together on that. So, in addition to having friendships across disciplines, I've actually done some projects across disciplines. I think that's really important, something that I think academia doesn't do enough.

AR – I agree. I agree. A lot of the people that I interview have affiliations with women's studies and one of the things I'm curious about is the relationship, as you perceive it, between psychology and women's studies. How do you see psychology fitting in with women's studies or what is that relationship from your point of view?

SN – I think a lot of times women's studies departments are either humanities-based or social science-based. One of the things we've tried hard to do is at Seton Hall is to make it be kind of crossing disciplines. We've actually gone to the model of co-directors. There are a few us who've been very involved in trying to shape it, including Tracy, the former director, and myself as former director. Our current co-director, one of them was history and library science. So the historian left s**o** now we have library science and now we're attempting to bring in a woman who does great feminist work in religious studies. Having co-directors, I think, automatically means they have to think outside their discipline. We always had it so that anyone who wanted to be a part of the women's faculty could be. So, you have this big group of people and they're wonderful, but you'd be talking about eight million different things. We sat done with our dean, who I worked for recently, and we talked to him about the future of women's studies, and he said why not have a board. So, that really makes a lot of sense.

We're in the process of suggesting people for the board so that they'll be a smaller decision making group. I think that's going to really enable it to be more interdisciplinary and not just kind of going with the tide of the moment. I do think it's something that needs to worked towards. We have explicitly chosen people for our board. Our first choices for this board come from all the different – the range of sciences, social sciences, humanities, and arts. We've really tried to get both genders, people of different sexual orientations. It's hard because we don't have a ton of people of color at Seton Hall, but we're trying to get a least one, hopefully two people of color so that we have a really wide range. I think it forces you to then to be better at this kind of cross-fertilization.

AR – Yeah and it seems to me that the harder the science, the less likely it is to be part of women's studies. Even some harder ends of psychology, it's harder to get the intersection with women's studies going, partly I think because of skepticism on the part of women's studies about the kind of approaches that psychologists may use. I know that you, being a quantitative person… I mean, in my women's studies program at York, it's like, "Oh you do stats? You know, that's kind of evil."

SN – You know, that's always something that kind of ticks me off. Why can't we use all the tools available to us? And so Cecilia Marzabadi, who is one of the ones who does the work with us and she's a chemist, she's one of the first who said she was going to be on board. She was acting director of women's studies when I was on sabbatical, so that's great. In my little research group, Janine Buckner does the narrative work. So even though she codes it and then quantifies it, she looks at it from quantitative and qualitative perspectives. So, what's nice is that we've got this little group and I'm very quantitative for social science and Janine is less so and Cecilia is a chemist. I think that's great. I mean, Janine, if you look at feminist research methods, she would fit it the most, but why are methods then not feminists? Why, say our choice of topic, you know, collaborative style, why are all these other feminist things not enough. It's interesting.

AR – Why can't one be a quantitative feminist social scientist?

SN – I was going to say I am (laughs).

AR – Exactly, you are one. You embody it. Well, we've talked a little bit about this already, but if I can get you to elaborate, are there any ways in which you think feminist psychology has to continue to push the envelope or things that it hasn't been as successful in doing? What needs to be looked to in the future?

SN – You know, again, the kinds of areas where we don't have as many women. So, say in neuroscience, for example, we have all this wonderful fMRI technology. If we had more feminist psychologists working with that, the questions that would be asked would change a bit. I would like to see that.

AR – Where do you think we are now? I mean, sex or gender differences has been an area of, I mean it's a huge area. Historically, it's been a huge focus for feminist and non-feminist psychologists alike to look at sex and gender differences. Where do you see that field going in the future?

SN – That is a really good question. I don't think it'll ever go away, partly because people find it interesting. I wish we would focus more on sex and gender similarities because there are more similarities than differences and although I certainly wouldn't deny there are differences, you actually know more about a person by knowing their culture, their cultural background, or the country they live in, than by knowing their gender. So I think we blow it up too much. I do gender work and I need to be careful about this, too. I don't want to make it seem like, you know, women are having such a hard time doing STEM. I do worry about that. Everyone talks about, "Oh, wouldn't it be nice to have a time where we don't have to deal with this?" I don't think that we'll ever, not in our lifetime, get there. So, it's a really good question. Am I causing more problems? Sometimes I wonder if when you publish these kinds of things, do you end up causing more problems than you're solving?

AR – There are lots of different views on this, even within feminist psychology and I kind of agree with you that this is something that is always going to be there. How do we ensure that it's more feminist, like you say, that culture and other variables account for more than gender in many cases. I think it's hard to know how to deal with it. Is there anything that I haven't asked about, about you, about any aspects of your career that you would like to kind of have on the tape?

SN – I guess, one thing, you asked earlier about advice – I think another thing that I thought about is that I think it's really important for those of us who are feminist to not only do what we do in the academy, but to do it in our communities. I don't always have time, but when I do – I was, for a long time, a Big Sister in Newark doing mentoring. Most recently, I was on the board for the New Jersey Coalition against Sexual Assault for a couple of years. I think it's important to find ways to bring whatever academic skills you have, I mean less so as a Big Sister – you don't need any particular skills to be a Big Sister. With NJCASA, I'm still in touch with them working on a project in collecting data and ways in which they can construct a survey. So, I think it's important that we take our skills and bring them to the community as well, so that we're having a wider impact because not everybody has the opportunity to be at a university and not everyone has that privilege. I think it's important that we bring what we have to people who might not.

AR – And making the university more relevant to the community and breaking down those barriers. One of the things we like to ask and it's sometimes hard for people to answer it, but

looking at your career thus far, which of your accomplishments do you take most satisfaction in, so far?

SN – I saw that on your list too. It's a hard one because I feel like I've just started out. I've been at Seton Hall for 10 years. So, if you don't count graduate school, my career has been ten years. I just feel like there's so much more that I want to do. I'm not even really sure how to answer that.

AR – It's a hard one. We're often interviewing people who have had 50 years behind them, but you're sort of just, as you say, you're more of an early-to-mid-career professional at the moment. But is there anything you have done so far that you felt, "Gosh, that felt really good." Or, "I'm really glad I did that."

SN – Honestly, writing the statistics textbook was, for me, a way to combine all of my interests because it's teaching, for sure, and it's research because you're having to pull in all the different things you know about quantitative methods and you're citing studies and you're getting to read them. Of course, I would pick the things to read that were of interest to me. Also, the feminist part of me, to make it have both the pedagogy and the content that would be feminist and working with Tom, my co-author, who is fantastic and learning about how the whole publishing process works, it was just a fun project. It sounds weird, but I was on sabbatical most of the year I wrote it. I was living in Bosnia while I wrote it, in rural Bosnia, actually. So that might have also made it seem more fun because it was in a very remote area, but I really had more fun doing something work-related than I had in a really long time.

AR – And you get to reach a lot of people with it too, hopefully.

SN – Yeah, hopefully.

AR – Okay, let's stop there.

SN – Okay.