

Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Lisa M. Diamond

*Interviewed by Leeat Granek
Washington, D.C.
August 6, 2011*

When citing this interview, please use the following citation:

Diamond, L. M. (2011, August 6). Interviewed by L. Granek [Video Recording]

Psychology's Voices Oral History and Online Archive Project. Washington, DC.

For permission to use this interview in a published work, please contact:

Alexandra Rutherford, PhD
Project Director, Psychology's Feminist Voices
alexr@yorku.ca

©Psychology's Feminist Voices, 2012

Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project
Interview with Lisa M. Diamond
Interviewed by Leeat Granek
Washington D.C.
August 6, 2011

LD: Lisa Diamond, Interview participant

LG: Leeat Granek, Interviewer

LD: My name is Lisa Diamond

LG: And where are you?

LD: I'm an associate professor of psychology and gender studies at the University of Utah.

LG: Great. And in terms of the interview, I'm going to ask some general questions about your development of your feminist identity and then I will move into asking some more specific questions about your career, and then at the end we will do some wrap up questions: advice you have, where do you see the field moving. If there is anything at anytime that you want to expand on feel free, if there are any stories that come to you, it's a conversation more than a structured interview. So the first question is just a very general question: Can you tell me about the emergence and development of your feminist identity?

LD: For me probably most of that took place in College. I mean, I remember, I went to an all girl's high school and so we were somewhat aware of feminism, but in very vague terms. If anything, as an adolescent I had a very negative view of feminism and I think most people did. It was people who didn't want you to have children or get married, which is kind of ironic because I don't have children and I am gay so I can't get married, so some part of me should have known that that was for me, but no, that didn't happen. But actually, I remember Betty Friedan came to speak at my high school, I think when I was around 16 and she was totally awesome, because she just basically said, "if you would just like the choice to do whatever the heck you want to do with your life, I have some news for you, that means you're a feminist." She just had this very clear, just clarion call that it was really about options and autonomy. It was like a light bulb going off in my head. I had never heard it presented that way and so after that moment I was like, "Oh, okay, so this does apply to me," so I became more interested in feminist issues. I remember, my best friend and I, who also had this emerging feminist identity, we actually, the week of graduation, because we were both high achievers in the school, we knew that the headmaster viewed us as these good examples of achievement. So we made an appointment to talk to him to do this exit interview. I really don't remember whose idea this was to basically communicate to him, that although the school was supposedly all about empowerment and women and women's achievement, that not enough was being done to promote, sort of, notions of healthy sexuality. {3:01} And, I'm like why did we decide that this male headmaster...what were we thinking? So

we had this whole meeting about how there needed to be more positive sexual, female positive sexuality education, blah, blah, blah... So obviously on some level I had already become a little bit strident, although I look back on that now and I'm like that was the ballsy-ist, strangest thing. I think it was actually my friend who spearheaded that, I don't think I would have done it without her. So by the time I went to college at the University of Chicago, I had a stronger sense of myself as a feminist, and I believe that I identified as a feminist at that time. And my roommate in college, who became my best friend, was also an ardent feminist so that helped solidify that. Of course in college there is like 3 million opportunities to discover all the things that feminism can mean and be and all the ways to act on that and explore that. I became pretty politically minded and more politically active in college, and also that's where I began taking feminist theory courses and getting more experience with the academic side, which you know in high school I had no exposure to feminist thinking, feminist writing, anything, it was more just the idea of it [feminism]. In college I did more intellectual work and discovered feminist post-modern philosophical writing and, so that was really - and that was probably around my second year of college. I remember taking a course with Lauren Berlant, who is this overly smart person, it's like you can't even be near her because her smartness obliterates everything in its path and you can't really understand half of what she's telling you. That was a really, really revelatory and really, really exciting time for me. And also, I was accustomed, because I was smart in high school, I was accustomed to pretty much being able to tackle anything intellectually that I tried to tackle. I had never encountered a piece of writing that I couldn't figure out. I struggled a little bit with calculus, but even that I did pretty well on. So taking this feminist theory class was probably the first time that I was like "my brain hurts," I literally, this is pushing me beyond some of the really difficult theoretical stuff. I had never encountered stuff that I literally could not get through before without help, without some theoretical help. And that was exciting. It was exciting to finally have something be that hard, that challenging, that I was "like I don't actually get this yet. I need to work to get this."

LG: So what do you think it was that made it challenging for you? Was it just outside of your experience?

LD: I think that level of sort of deep theory, was outside my experience. It wasn't stuff I had encountered before. A part of it as well, and this is something that annoys me about feminist writing and other theoretical writing, not just feminist writing. There is a certain wing of feminist theory where they almost enjoy being opaque, so they'll create new words and put parentheses in crazy places, to be experimental and some of that I understand the reason for it, but as a scientist I believe in clarity as much as possible. Sometimes things are hard to understand, but I don't believe in difficulty for the sake of difficulty and sometimes I think there is a little strand of that in some feminist theoretical writing and that just annoys me because...one of the reasons I find it annoying is that I see graduate students emulating that because they think "oh, if I make my writing unintelligible, I'll seem smart" and I'm like, "there's a difference when Hélène Cixous is unintelligible and when you're unintelligible. When she's unintelligible it's because she's really smart; when you're unintelligible it's because you are writing poorly." And that as an educator now, I find that tricky and annoying. But, it was certainly fascinating for me to throw myself into an area where I didn't fully know what was going on. That for me was part of the excitement about feminism on an intellectual level. {7:45}

LG: Okay, and were you involved in any feminist activities in the activist component of it?

LD: Yeah, I was. I was in Chicago, so I ended up joining the board of the Chicago chapter of the National Organization for Women and that was the time of the Casey decision and so there was a lot of clinic defense and activism going on in Chicago and I got involved in that. I went through a real period of questioning as to like, “well, what do I want to do? I am really good at school, I could go the graduate school route and become an academic. Or, now I have these connections to these non-profit feminist groups in Chicago. Do I want to become an activist? What do I want to do?” And that was really unclear to me for awhile and what ended up resolving it, because I also came out as a lesbian in college and was starting to explore some of the psychological research on LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender], although at that time it was not LGBT, it was just L and G [Lesbian and Gay] populations. And I very quickly found out that there was an emerging body of research on that, but that it was very tiny and very underdeveloped and didn’t have any of the richness of the sort of feminist theoretical work that I had become accustomed to. It was like, the most rudimentary, simplistic research possible. Once I realized, like wow, there is so much more that could be done here. And all my advisors in college were like, if you are going to propose to go to graduate school you need to show them that you have new, different ideas and so I was like well, why don’t I just build my proposal around that. It was very happenstance. I’m like I want to go to graduate school, there doesn’t seem to be a lot of research yet on same sex sexuality identity development in women, and there’s not enough on relationships so let me just kind of focus on that. And it was very fortuitous, because I think that it was a time during which there were enough people at the faculty level going yeah, there really isn’t enough going on there. So my proposed trajectory of study was received really favorably and I had a lot of faculty being like, “yeah, these are really good ideas,” and that, so I was like, “okay, I guess that’s what I will do. I guess I’ll become an academic.” [Laughs] So it feels, in retrospect, it doesn’t feel very well planned you know? It’s like each thing kind of unfolded in a haphazard way. Even the choice to major in psychology seemed very random, because I was taking a lot of anthropology courses at [the University of] Chicago, because Chicago has this legendary Anthropology Department, and they are very theoretical. I was drawn to those courses because they had some of that theoretical richness that my feminism courses had and I really liked that, essentialism and social constructionism, it was all coming together and I was really into that. So I thought I was going to major in Anthropology. And there was no Gender Studies major at Chicago at that time, I believe there is now, but at the time there was not. So I thought I was going to be an Anthropology major, so I could do all this theoretical... Then my best friend and my roommate said that she was going to be an anthropology major and I thought it was going to be bad for our friendship [Laughs] if we had the same major, I’m like, “oh no, we are going to be really competitive and that’s going to be really bad for us, so I’ll major in psychology.” So I switched to psychology, for the sake of us, because of course I was also madly in love with her, but nothing ever happened. So I switched to psychology because that seemed like a close enough fit and then she ended up switching to psychology too, so I ended up majoring in psychology and becoming a psychologist and I look back and I’m like, “it kind of made sense that I became a relationship researcher, because I became a psychologist to protect my relationship with my friend.”

{12:18}

LG: So, can you talk a little bit about, I was going to actually ask you how you came to psychology, but you just said...

LD: You know, it was really rather random, because I have to be honest, the Psychology Department at Chicago is not really the strain of psychology that I really do or feel close to. It was very experimental, very cognitive: "let's take some people and expose them to this visual image subliminally." So the classes that I was taking in psychology, were not that great, they were kind of unsatisfying, but there was actually a department at Chicago called the Human Development Department that was strange. It was sort of like a crossbreed between, it was mainly anthropologists, but it was anthropologist who felt somehow tied to developmental psychology. So it was this odd little hybrid department. Rick [Richard] Shweder was in that department and he was my advisor for my senior thesis and he is an anthropologist, but his whole thing was cultural psychology. He was trying to meld psychological theory and anthropology. And that's what I was drawn to. And you could not major in human development as an undergraduate, but pretty much all my psychology courses were in human development. So that was my link to psychology. It wasn't even like normal psychology, it was kind of like odd psychology. Gilbert Herdt was in that department, Bert [Friedbert] Kohler was in that department. So these were all folks who had some sort of link to psychology, but really through a more anthropological lens. Even as a psychology major, I was a rather unusual psychology major, because most of my classes were taken in human development, which was a little bit odd. So I really never identified strongly with this sort of classic tradition of social psychological experiments. And I remember every once in a while when I would be walking down the...because the human development was even in a different little location, it was in a cute little house. So all my meetings with Rick Shweder, as my advisor, were off in that cute little house. And then the psychology department was in a whole separate building. And every time I would be walking the halls of the Psychology Department, I remember being like "okay, I am a psychology major and I don't know anybody in this building, like I don't really belong here." When I applied to graduate school I was immediately drawn, one of the things that drew me to Cornell's [University] program is that it was human development. Cornell has a psych program, but I did not go to that program. I went to the Human Development Program, which also was a bit interdisciplinary, but not with anthropology. Their version of interdisciplinary was sort of sociology and psychology. And in truth it wasn't all that interdisciplinary, because basically the sociologists and the psychologists were kind of split, hey never talked to each other.

LG: Yeah.

LD: But from the very beginning, my connection to the discipline of psychology has been a little bit odd. Even now, I am technically a developmental psychologist. I am in the developmental area of [University of] Utah. Even that's kind of odd right? Because as a development psychologist I, the only sort of aspect of traditional developmental psychology that I do is that I focus on adolescents.

LG: Yeah

{15:47}

LD: But late adolescence, and a lot of the stuff I do is on adults and it doesn't really look like developmental psychology. Most of the folks who do sexual orientation research are in social psychology, so all these people assume I am a social psychologist. I feel like for my entire life whatever identity I have in anything I am always a bad example of that identity [Laughs]. I'm not a very good example of a psychologist. I am not a very good example of a developmental psychologist. I have lived this crazy hybrid life, but I feel like given that my entrée into academia was through feminism, in which those categories and boundaries didn't matter, maybe that set me up to be "okay, I am a bad example of everything, whoopee woo, you know? So sue me!"

LG: And why is it that the boundaries can't stretch to accommodate what you do as that?

LD: That's what I want to know. I don't really understand why it's such a big deal. The only reason I can sort of come up with is academia, like a lot of different disciplines, they become entrenched in their own bureaucracy and I don't think this is unique to academia, wherever there is sort of this entrenched system of power. Certainly in my own department, my own department actually is surprisingly interdisciplinary and every couple of years we even throw around the idea of even getting rid of the disciplinary boundaries of social and developmental [psychology]. The reason we don't is because we know it could potentially hurt our graduate students. That the world expects them [graduate students] to come out with a little stamp on their forehead saying developmental psychologist, cognitive scientist, and that we owe it to them. It may be fun for us to throw away all the boundaries, because a lot of us do collaborate across areas, but if it hurts them, then we are not a very good training program. So it's one of those things, because the system is like that and we have to go along with that. And we suspect that there is probably a lot of programs who would like to get rid of some of those boundaries, but they all figure "well everybody else is doing it, so we have to do it." I do think that for people working in the field, there is a lot more openness and they do stretch the boundaries to accommodate diverse bodies of research, but entrenched systems of power are entrenched systems of power that's one thing feminism definitely has taught me.

LG: Yeah, and so can you talk a little bit about how you merge your feminism and your psychology in graduate school as well as your training at Cornell [University] and then we can move into some more questions.

LD: Well, one of the things... I'll start with what is currently true. I was blessed by the heavens, because my position is a joint appointment with a gender studies program at Utah and that has been... I remember when I took the job everyone's like, "oh, don't take a joint position. Because there will be service obligations from two different parts of you. Your home department will just forget that you are a joint appointment. They won't understand that you have meetings and teaching and obligations. They are just going to demand a hundred percent of you. Gender Studies is going to demand a hundred percent of you. You are going to be stretched, you will not have enough time to do your own research, you are going to be crazy" and blah, blah, blah.

{19:11}

I've talked to folks who have joint appointments in various programs and often that is the case. That just ended up not being the case for me, partly because I was very aggressive with the Psychology Department like, "I am a joint appointment, you must not, you have half of me." Even though they sort of have more of me, the truth is that they were very respectful in terms of the amount of service that they gave me. And having this group of colleagues in Gender Studies, in the English Department, in the History Department, in Economics, in Political Science, not Psychologists. Folks who were speaking the language that I had discovered in college, who were thinking really deeply because I love psychology, I am a psychologist, but they are not the deepest theoretical people that you ever met. I could kind of get by with that when I knew I had this other body of colleagues and that I had to teach these courses that allowed me to delve, to keep up to date with that literature, to keep up to date with that reading. If I had not had that joint position, I think I kind of would have stopped growing and developing as a feminist on that sort of theoretical and intellectual level because there was no reinforcement to really do that. You are a psychology professor, write grants, and blah, blah, blah. That has been fundamental to my continued sort of development. I have been at Utah for 11 years and when I moved to Utah a lot of people were like "you are a lesbian feminist and you are moving to Utah? Are you, do you have a death wish?" My partner was like "what are we doing?" But the intellectual environment, in terms of feminism, unbelievable, unbelievably rich and vibrant in ways that I never could have imagined. I think a lot of people say its that you have this oppositional culture. Its like you have the folks who are counter to the dominant hetero patriarchy, [Church of] Latter Day Saints cultural tradition, its easier to band together when you can see who it fighting you and who hates you and who is trying to actually destroy you. That might be true to some extent, but I have just found a group of colleagues there [University of Utah] that pushes me and challenges me and allows me not to just become like another psychologist. The other sort of benefit is that I am the only empirical person among the joint appointments and I have argued to them for years and they finally listened, I cannot be the only example of science. I think its good because I drew a lot of psychology majors to Gender Studies who were like, "wow, I thought science was bad and patriarchal and if you analyze data you are bad." I was like, "no, that isn't the case, there's a way to be a feminist scientist." And a lot of students were like, "wow, this is so exciting." And my argument to Gender Studies is, we need more examples of that. We need some other scientific, we need some sociologists in here. We need to really build on this so that students get a real sense of the richness of feminist theoretical and empirical work so we actually hired, just this past year, a sociologist and we are exploring a joint appointment with another. Its really been great on both sides. That its allowed me not just to be an empirical person and it has brought a notion of feminist scientific empirical work to Gender Studies, in a way that I think has been really, really great for the students. That has just been, when I was searching for an academic position it wasn't like I was looking for a joint position I just wanted a job, any job.

LG: Yeah.

LD: I landed in a place, given where I came from and my own sort of feminism and my work, was the best possible place I could have landed and I had no idea at the time. I feel like, I was just lucky. Because looking back and seeing where a lot of my feminist colleagues in graduate school ended up, you know there is not a lot of support within the discipline of psychology to pursue that. {23:32}

LG: Right.

LD: And so it kind of shrivels on the vine.

LG: Yeah.

LD: It just shrivels away. And one of the ways I have seen that, is over the years a number of departments have tried to recruit me away from Utah, on the basis that they were trying to build a joint psychology, feminist studies or Women's Studies thing and they are like, "we can't find anyone." Where are the psychologists doing feminist research? Research that could live within Gender Studies, and they were like, "we can't find them". I said well, I can tell you why you won't find them, because there is absolutely not support for the training process, for folks to actually develop that line of research.

LG: So what do you think, in your view, makes a feminist scientist? A feminist empirical scientist?

LD: For me, the main thing is just having a critical perspective on gender and a critical perspective on the methods of science. That does not mean that you have to reject them. I spent many years reading Donna Haraway, and reading Sandra Harding and being about as critical about scientific practice as you could be, but I do it. I do it with a critical perspective that understands both the strengths and limitations of that mode of inquiry. There are a lot of scientists who just cling to the scientific method and believe they are totally objective and I think they are full of bunk. And then, I have met a lot of feminist who are like, "there is not a way to collect data without it being oppressive, and data has no meaning, and the world is socially constructed" and I think that is bunk too. So for me it means being able to work within the traditional scientific practice with an eye to the social context, the historical context of the development of positivist practice and a very clear view as to what you can and cannot get from that. For me, that is how I define my identity as a feminist scientist. I am doing science, and I believe I am doing good science. But I am not stupid enough to think that I am producing some pure objective knowledge, or that I am seeking the path to truth. I am seeking a path, and I am not sure if its truth that I am seeking or knowledge or what. I've always has this multifaceted view of methodology. One example of that is, some of my research is extremely what you would call hard science. I do a lot of psycho-physiological research on the effect of close relationships on HPA axis functioning and cardiovascular functioning and looking at the ways in which the social context of our relationships kind of actually gets into our bodies and into our physical functioning. So I do this psycho-physiological research and yet, in a lot of my research on sexual orientation has focused on qualitative interviews, these more kind of conventional feminist methodologies that are a little bit more embedded in social context. And I actually have people contact me all the time, they're like "oh wow, do you know that there is another Lisa Diamond who does research..."

{26:41}

They actually think there's two different people, because I have very different lines of research and different methodologies. That's viewed as weird and bad and yet for me personally that is the only way I can stay sane, because neither one of them tells me everything I want to know. But somehow alternating between them and combining them makes me more able to maintain a critical distance on both of them. That ability to switch modalities, I feel like, keeps me from ever feeling to invested in one, because certainly academic disciplines want you to do the same thing over and over and over again. That's pretty much what you are rewarded for. But that would just kill me. That would destroy me, to just do the same thing over. And there are sometimes I go to conferences and I will see some pretty big name person who just pretty much doing the same thing they were doing 30 years ago. I remember, I was with a friend and I said if it ever looks like I am headed in that direction, where I am just doing the same thing, would you just take me out back and just shoot me or hit me or tie me up and do something to prevent that from happening, because you have to keep challenging yourself or else you just get stale.

LG: I want to ask you some more specific questions about the actual work that you do before we get into that. Do you want to talk about some of the major themes in your work?

LD: Probably, I mean, when I started doing research on sexuality and when I started the project for which I am probably published the most, which is a longitudinal study of sexual identity, I was mainly motivated to do that study because: a) there seemed to be a rigid model of sexuality being put out there, that was very deterministic and that, coming from my anthropology training, anything that seemed deterministic, all my alarm bells went off, I'm like "clearly human development has got to be more complicated than that, I know all about social context." So that kind of bugged me. And I literally could not find studies of adolescent women, I literally could not find them. And as a feminist, I was like "come on, it's embarrassing, it's the early 90s." And I would find these studies that were like, "well, we recruited this sample and there was only 3 women and 15 men so we decided to make a study on men." I'm like, okay that's feminism 101, that's like 1980. You cannot just only study men and assume that it applies to women. So those sort of 2 things of putting women back into the research, representing their experiences on a very basic level was something that was a very driving force and this notion, this rigid determinism, just rankled me. So those were the two things that for me have been very abiding goals. That looking for more nuanced, more expansive models of development that get beyond the old nature/nurture, essentialism/social constructionism binary. That has been an abiding theme in my work. And second, representing women's actual experiences, because one of the things I found very early on doing interviews with women, is that women themselves were feeling sort of oppressed by supposedly pro gay stories. They were like "oh, I don't know if you should interview me, I'm not sure I am a really good example of a lesbian, because I've really had a complicated past." And I realized that women were feeling marginalized, not only from heterosexual culture, but marginalized from lesbian and gay culture as well, because that rigid, deterministic, essentialist story, they knew it didn't fit them. I was like "wow, even the community that is supposed to be accepting them, is actually marginalizing them, that their voices are not being heard there either."

{31:08}

LG: Was that insight that you had from doing research or was that just from conversations you were having with people?

LD: Well, it started out, I remember, it crystallized more when I started to do the research, which I started doing rather soon. But it also, I remember having conversations in graduate school just with fellow kind of queer folk and it struck me, that it was very ironic that the sort of “we were all born that way” rhetoric, as it is now, was taken to be the gay positive rhetoric, “oh, we are all this way, we are born this way and we knew when we were five and that’s why we deserve rights,” which struck me as sort of an illogical kind of thing, because there were plenty of people being like, “well, if you’re born that way, well we can just switch your gene and fix you.” So I’m like, “that is not necessarily a positive story,” but that was the cultural story of that time. So people would be parroting that story and then all these people would be like, “well, I actually didn’t know that I was attracted to women until like last year when...” I was like, that’s really odd, because there is a story that everybody keeps telling because it’s the culturally approved narrative and yet there is a whole bunch of people who are like, “well, I’m an exception” and I am like, “how many of these exceptions can there be?” That was exactly, pretty much what I found when I started doing my research. Everyone was like “oh, I must be different than everyone else, because I’ve had a more complicated past” and I was like, “wow, there are actually more exceptions than there are people who fit the standard approved story.” I was so struck by the fact that the approved sort of rigid, essentialist, deterministic story had become so powerful and so shaping that a huge number of individuals thought that they were unusual when they were in fact normative. At that time I didn’t even have enough data to really confirm that was the case, well now we do. We have a number of nationally represented studies showing that the type of person that everyone thinks is the prototypical gay person, who knew at an early age, who had a very stable trajectory. That that person exists, its not like that person doesn’t exist, but they are a minority compared to the folks with much more complicated patterns. I just find it unbelievable how marginalized some of those more complicated stories have been. And again, it’s like back to feminism 101, those voices need to be represented, those women need to be represented. That marginalization, from their own community is in many ways more damaging. We are used to being marginalized from heterosexual culture, it’s like, “yeah, sure.” But when that marginalization happens within the community of individuals who are supposed to share your experience, I feel that that is doubly negative and that has been something I have always been very concerned about.

LG: So can you talk a bit about the book *Sexual Fluidity*? I think that is where you were leading. It received a lot of academic and mainstream media attention, so can you tell me in your view what is the most significant impact of this book and then I have a few other follow up questions.

LD: Well probably, one of the reasons I wrote the book, is that over the years as I’ve been doing this longitudinal study, periodically some of my participants would be like, “oh, send me anything you have written on this because I find this study interesting.”

{34:53}

I would send them my little academic articles, which of course are horribly boring if you are not an academic and a lot of the response would say, “oh that was really good, but it would great if there was a more accessible form of this.” Because a lot of them really got what I was trying to do. A lot of them said “wow, you know I really thought I was the only person with this strange bisexual path or I’m a lesbian who fell in love with a man, I thought I was the only one, I thought I was so strange and it’s so nice talking to you and realizing that I am not so strange, its very comforting.” So they got that notion of, “wow, I am being represented here” and they would say “but I’d love to be able to communicate this to friends and family and colleagues in a way that’s a little easier than these journal articles.” One of my respondents said, “I wish there was something I could give to my mother that would explain this.” So when I decided to write the book, that was the sort of voice in my head. Something that my respondents themselves could easily get and something they could give to their mother. Something they could give to their cousin, something they could hand to somebody and say, “you think I’m so strange, look I am not so strange, there are a lot of us strange folk out there.” That was really my goal. I produced plenty of academic publications. I felt like I had already gained as much sort of traditional legitimacy as I could gain and so I was not out for that, I was not seeking that. I was not writing this book for an academic audience. There is no graph, there is no table in it. There are very few numbers in it. I wanted to find a way to communicate the basic message of this capacity, this more expansive notion of sexuality and this more complicated notion of sexual development to the average, everyday person. It was hard. You’re in academia and you learn to speak a certain way and it was hard to change your voice to that more accessible level. And it’s funny, I thought I was really trying to pare down the language and make it accessible and I thought I did a pretty good job and my mom is like, “you think that’s accessible! You have a funny notion of accessible, it’s still pretty highfalutin.” So, you know, you do what you can, but that was my motive - to communicate this to a more general audience, not an academic audience, not an intellectual audience at all.

LG: And so can you talk, I mean you were on Oprah, can you talk about some of the experiences. I have a two-pronged question about this. First, what is the experience of communicating this to a mainstream audience? And the second part of the question is about, I think I heard you talk or maybe read something about how sometimes those research findings get taken up and used.

LD: Yeah, that’s why I was kind of rolling my eyes, because my experience has been both positive and negative. The moment I started doing this research and started finding the kind of variability and change over time that I found, I was aware from the very beginning that this was a potentially political hot potato. Because the rhetoric about choice, blah, blah, blah, blah. Even though it was clear to me from my data that the women who were experiencing changes were not choosing those changes, that they often described it almost like weather systems, they’re like “I fell in love with someone, I didn’t choose it, it happened to me. ”

{38:50}

I knew that, in the simplistic way that things are described, that the culture has a very different understanding of change. I was concerned about two things. I was concerned about the research being misused by the people who actually had an anti-gay agenda and I was concerned about the research being viewed unfavorably by my own community of queer folk and feminists who were like, “don’t you realize that you are handing them on a platter this argument that oh, sexual orientation can change.” I was totally surprised by the fact that I have never, never gotten a negative response from within the [Gay and Lesbian] community and I think it’s because I was giving voice to something everybody knew was out there. Every single response I have gotten from the community has been “thank god someone is finally talking about this in a more nuanced way from within, that things change and it’s not because we choose it, it’s because sexuality is complicated.” So I have only ever gotten an unbelievably warm embrace from the community that I think really testifies to the importance of giving a voice to the voiceless, because I think that is what they really responded to was, “wow, we have not been doing a good job of communicating the diversity of our community and this is work that does that.” So thank god that that happened, because I was so worried about that.

But, as I feared my findings end up on the conservative websites and stuff like that all the time. That if sexuality is fluid, then that means it’s a choice and therefore it doesn’t deserve rights or whatever. I’ve had to think really long and hard about what then my role is as the scientist in the public sphere, because I’m not stupid enough to think that I’m producing some objective scientific knowledge. My feminist perspective already prepared me for the fact that the work I produce is in a social context and I can’t pretend like, “oh, I’m above it all I just produced the science, and then...” because that is total bunk. But it still raises the question of then what is my role? How involved do I become? Over the years my approach has been just to be I think more aggressive than the field of psychology trains you to be about communicating what findings do and do not mean and correcting the record when it’s distorted. I still think that the discipline of psychology and the discipline of science in general says, “well you can’t prevent that stuff, so don’t worry too much about it and don’t sully yourself by getting involved in those conversations. If you get too involved then you are viewed as an advocate and not as a scientist and that hurts your credibility, so don’t do it.” But I think that they, and I understand the rationale for that argument, but I think that in my case, with a topic is as controversial as the topic I study, that that’s just unethical. It’s just unethical and I can’t prevent, yeah I put my stuff out there and I can’t prevent how it’s used, but it’s my research and it’s my data and I believe it’s my responsibility to communicate it very aggressively, not just to other scientists, but to the public at large. And I think that for me the critical thing is that - and that’s sort of the feminist activist part of me - is that, I am producing this work not just for the sake of academia, but because it lives in the public sphere, it lives in the public domain, I have a responsibility to the community that I study to communicate my findings accurately to them before somebody else does it wrong. I feel like my sort of version of feminist engagement ethically obligates me and gives me the responsibility to be more aggressive about being the one to communicate what I think my findings imply and what I don’t think they imply. But that’s hard, because you can’t catch all of it, the internet is out there, and who knows what floats around.

LG: So what was that like that experience for you on Oprah? That's a really...

LD: The Oprah thing was so kind of random. The whole thing happened kind of randomly. I got a call from somebody at the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation [GLAAD] and it was just because she had remembered me from like years before and they were like, "oh, they are doing this show on women who end up with women after many years and I am just going to give your name to them." So it wasn't like they read the book or knew anything about the book. They just got my name from someone else and they interviewed me over the phone and basically made the decision to fly me out three days before the show. It wasn't like this, "oh my work had been gaining prominence and it ended up on Oprah," that is not at all what happened. It was much more random and much more, kind of like flukey than that. It was just luck, and then they were like, "Lisa Diamond, you should talk to her. Oh and she happens to have a book out. And they are like oh, and send us a copy of the book." The whole thing was so last minute and so random and so crazy. I was certainly thrilled about it. I also was not entirely sure what direction the show was, I didn't know if this was going to be a good thing or a bad thing or what. I think it ended up being a generally positive experience, mainly because I've gotten so many emails from women after that show being like, "oh my god, I always thought there were other women like me and now I realize..." So that same sort of theme of women who did not feel like they were being represented or thought that they were alone or thought that they were strange kind of quirky exceptions, saw that show and were like "oh, I am not so strange." For me that made the whole thing worthwhile. I still get emails from women who have seen that show and be like "I thought I was the only one. Oh my god, this describes what my daughter is going through. Oh my god, this describes what my mother is going through. I am going to buy your book and thank you for communicating it so clearly." For me, that was what was important about that show.

LG: Yeah and I am asking about it not just because of the celebrity status of Oprah but just because it's so rare for the science to become part of the public conversation in this way, on a national, international level. I think that's remarkable

LD: It's interesting, because when I was being interviewed by the producers I had been given the heads up by someone that they don't really like to have researchers on the show, because they are really boring and they don't do a very good job communicating. Now, I had always been a very personable kind of person. I did a lot of theatre in College so, I get great teaching evaluations, because I am not a very typical dry boring person. I'm very personable, I'm pretty good at communicating and I knew that that was true so knowing that I was like, "okay, I have got to be so clear, I have got to be so focused," which was fine, I feel like that had already been a real value to me. I already had a lot of experience trying to figure out how to do that in the process of writing the book. I felt like I had already been through that road in my mind of all right I know when I am losing folks, I know when I start to go down an academic path. I have to be so crystal clear that it becomes impossible not to understand what I am saying. So that was a sort of approach I had adopted when the producers were talking to me on the phone.

{47:27}

I'm like I have got to convince them that I can be on Oprah and I can talk about my research and people will not turn the television off! I know I can do it. So I think I succeeded to that extent.

LG: So can you, on the actual content now, talk a little about what is the most important thing you learned about female sexuality? And also if it surprised you, if you were surprised by what you found, or in what ways?

LD: Well, in many ways there were sort of the same things. When I started the research I was rather naïve about what I would find. I was like, "I know that that rigid male model can't be everything," but that was pretty much as far as I thought it through [Laughs] in many ways it was a poorly planned study. I thought I would find some variability. I did not think I would find as much variability as I did and especially as I kept checking in with women over time and the amount of change did not go down. I thought "well there will be a lot of change early on and then people will sort of settle down" and that did not happen. If anything more time meant more change and that really surprised me. That the variability and fluidity in female sexuality was such a powerful current that it got stronger over time rather than weaker. There appeared to be such a robust gender difference. It's still unclear to me, and I think to everyone, how big that gender difference is and where it comes from. There are men that I talk to who are like, "I can't even get my head around this notion of fluidity, for me it is just so... my sexuality just feels rigid, it just feels that way to me" and there are a lot of men who have articulated that and I believe that they are speaking the truth to their experience. And then I speak to men who are like, "wow, maybe I am a woman, because I read your book and I sound like one of those women." So I know the story I am telling about fluidity in female sexuality, I know it applies to some men. I am not sure how many men it applies to and I am not sure how much of that is biological or social or cultural or what and I think that that is sort of the interesting question that drives me now, is what's going on with men for goodness sake? But I think one of the things that I feel kind of proudest of is the number of researchers who have been like, "you know, I no longer even use the same word, sexual orientation, to refer to women and men. I think that they are potentially so different that we have to say female sexual orientation and male sexual orientation and you have convinced me that they are not the same animal." I feel like, if that is all that I have done, I can go to bed with that, I can sleep on that, because that is again a core thing about feminism, let's not assume that the male model applies to women. And if all I have done is convince folks that we need to study women entirely separately and figure out what the truth of that experience is, that for me as a scientist and a feminist is an important goal.

LG: And so just sort of the last question about this particular body of research and you kind of already answered it a little bit, I will ask you and maybe you will have more to say about it, it really hit a nerve, it hit a nerve academically, it hit a nerve in the public and it's something that has been taken up in a lot of different spheres. Why do you think this has been such a...

LD: Well it's interesting because I think, obviously it hit a nerve.

[Cell phone goes off]

{51:40}

LD: I had been doing this research since the early nineties and so NOW it's hit a nerve.

LG: That's interesting.

LD: But it's not like, everyone is like, "wow, your research has had such an impact" and I'm like, "no, its just that I happen to be around when the culture got around to this idea." And so it was interesting, because at the Oprah show, and my partner was there in the audience, and apparently in the warm up part of the show they were playing that Katy Perry song *I Kissed a Girl*. And people were dancing, all these like African American grandmothers from Mississippi who had tickets to the Oprah show for like a year, were dancing and grooving and my partner said, "I almost started to cry, because I had been seeing you struggle with this work for as long as I have known you and no one was listening and nobody got it and you were just kind of still doing it and everyone was like that's kind of a weird topic that you study," and she was like, "and now, all of a sudden, people are talking about it and you are still here and you are able actually, finally have people understand what the heck you are talking about. Like how did we get here? Ten years later they are ready for what you have been saying for ten years." So for me it doesn't feel like, "I did this work and it caused this thing." I feel like the cultural evolution was probably inevitable, because the same thing I was finding other people were kind of finding or talking about. Its inevitable, I think, that that nerve got triggered, and that people were talking about this more complicated... I think that it had to happen, because it is real. I happen to be doing my stuff in parallel from an academic direction, but I don't necessarily think that I provoked some public consciousness. I happened to be the only person who was studying that from an academic perspective, when the rest of the culture got around to noticing and saying "is there anybody who can actually tell us if this is actually happening? Oh look there is." That is what I think happened, so I don't necessarily think that I did anything. I think there was a parallel track and I was at the right place at the right time. So what I have tried to do is take that opportunity with the Oprah thing and take it seriously and say, "okay, then it's my responsibility to really work to make sure that my findings are not misinterpreted," when Oprah is like, "do you have any last words Dr. Diamond?" and I am like, "this does not mean that sexuality is chosen, right." I then, I have to take that opportunity that there is a little zeitgeist between the culture and my work and use it to correct the record and to not allow my findings to be politically misused. I feel like, yes I was at the right place at the right time, but I also feel like now it is my responsibility to be the right person to try and bridge that gap between what the culture thinks they know about sexuality and what we are finding on a scientific level.

LG: I was looking through your CV that you sent me and you have so many publications, I was looking through the different themes. Can you talk about some of the other work, publications that you are most proud of or that you feel are significant for you?

LD: Probably the work that I am most proud of is the *Psychological Review* piece called, "What Does Sexual Orientation Orient?"

{55:28}

That really came about because I started doing some research on attachment theory. I had always been interested in what the link is between sex and love, because so many of my respondents in my studies said, “well, I discovered my same sex attractions when I fell in love with this one particular person.” That is what got me interested in attachment theory in graduate school, because I was like, “well then, what do we know about love?” I quickly found out that the predominant theory was attachment theory and that it was an evolutionary theory about how basically the system of love in the brain is the same system that evolved for infant caregiver attachment. I had this sort of, I remember in the process of writing one of my qualifying exams I had this sort of aha moment and I’m like, “well if the love system is based in infant caregiver attachment, it can’t be a gender based system. It has got to be an open system. You have got to be able to fall in love with anyone, right if it’s the same system and gosh that sort of fits with a lot of the historical and anthropological stuff that I have read where people find or form these passionate attachments with anyone.” So even though all the sexual orientation research is presuming that if you are sexually oriented to the same sex you have got to be romantically, that does not, it doesn’t make any theoretical sense and once you split them up. but understand that there must be some kind of connection between them, well then the findings of my study make sense. That you can have a straight person, who accidentally falls in love with the same sex and that leads them to the unusual experience of same sex desire. That all makes sense to me now, but I would be talking about it and people would be, “I don’t know, that sounds kind of crazy.” I became, I mean it took me, I first started to articulate that idea in this qualifying exam that I wrote in, god, I think I must have written that exam in 1996 or something. The *Psychology Review* article was published I think in 2003. It took me a long time to actually nail that sucker down. The number of rewrites and rethinking, going back to the drawing board and there were times when it was just physically exhausting. But I remember thinking to myself, I think I am right about this, I so strongly feel that I am right and no one else is talking about this. I thought, if I can just get this darn thing, if I can get this one idea published, then I can die, because it is so hard, it’s the hardest thing I have ever written and I really believe that I am right and I really want to get this out there before anybody else figures it out, because I have one good idea [Laughs]. I have got to get the one good idea out there. It was grueling, it was not easy, but I did it. The really gratifying thing is that the article was very well received and I have people tell me all the time, “that that was one of the most, that it was an eye opening article. I had never thought about sex and love that way and you just made me see something in a totally different way.” That is like, all I ever wanted, that’s all I ever wanted and so that article probably means the most to me of everything that I have ever written. And the nice thing is that every once in awhile I will go back to it and re-read parts of it, usually because I am looking for some piece of information that I want to use somewhere else, and I still stand by everything in there and I am happy with the writing. I feel like every bit of blood, sweat, and tears that I threw into that thing, I feel like I feel it, I feel like I see my blood sweat and tears and I am happy with that. That probably means the most to me and also, because it’s a theoretical piece. It’s something that I feel like I am not sure I could have written that if I hadn’t had the sort of theoretical training that I pursued, despite the fact that psychology doesn’t really promote that sort of training, so that means quite a bit to me.

{59:58}

LG: It's so remarkable to hear you talking about it, also there seems to be something about your ability to be outside of the paradigms that exist, because there is something there. That knowing that you are right.

LD: It's clear to me, that attachment theorists they weren't even thinking about sexual orientation. The notion that the implications of love being based in the infant caregiver attachment theory is like, it had never occurred that it might have something. And then the sexual orientation folks, they are like, "attachment theory, what the hell is that?" There was truly no cross talk between those areas at all. I think that is true in a lot of the other areas in which I work, it's like, "wow, am I the only person..." Now at the University of Utah, I am part of the health psychology faculty and we recently hired someone else who does sexual health and we are both like, "how come the traditional health psychology folks..." who focus on cardiovascular medicine and all these other things. Sexual health is not a part of health. Sexual health is in reproductive health. And we're like, "Its health! Right?" So, it's the same sort of thing, let's bring together the sexuality people and the health people. It's like sexual health is not just Planned Parenthood, it's a lot broader than that. It's the same sort of thing, I feel like maybe my mission is to force things together that have not been viewed as related to one another at all.

LG: Can you talk a bit about the movement of the psychophysiology research because that seems pretty recent?

LD: Well, it's actually not that recent, I actually started that in graduate school.

LG: Okay.

LD: I mean that's the thing. It's sort of like certain things become visible or not visible at various points.

LG: The trajectory on the CV, that's how I sort of...

LD: My first kind of psychophysiology publication was back in like in 2000, so it's actually not that recent, but again it's not as visible, for whatever reason that is. I really got into that through my interest in attachment theory and the more I learned about the ways in which romantic love, as an experience, is deeply embedded in our body. That contrary to this notion that love is a cultural construction, other cultures don't even have an idea about love and that's just not true. I became, and especially because of so many of my respondents had this transformative experience in their sexuality, as a result of falling in love. I just became deeply interested in what the hell is love? What is it doing in us that it can potentiate such dramatic transformations in women's bodily experiences of desire? I became very interested in this brain/body. What is happening when you fall in love?

{1:02:55}

That is what got me into the psychophysiology of it, because I soon found that there is actually quite a significant body of research on how our emotional connections to other individuals end

up affecting the way our hearts and lungs and immune systems function. That is what drew me into that. How does this thing that seems to be outside your body, your link to this other person, your feelings for that other person, end up sort of instantiated in your physiological functioning. That's what got me interested in that, in the sort of psychobiology of intimacy, of intimate relationships.

LG: Are you able to combine the feminism with the psychobiology?

LD: That's harder. A lot of the research partly because it doesn't have as many sort of direct theoretical connections, although one of the really interesting and robust findings is that women benefit... Because in general, marriage is associated, marriage and other close, enduring relationships, are associated with a lot of physical health benefits. Better immune functioning, better cardiovascular functioning. And we now know a lot of those pathways. That to the degree to which close relationships down regulate stress, they down regulate a lot of those stress sensitive systems and they promote health and wellbeing, over the long run. Women do not benefit from marriage as much as men do. It's sort of hilarious, because there are not really many feminists in that field, and they are like, "oh, why must that be?" There have been a number of astute female researchers who are like, "I will tell you why it might be, because women do most of the work in marriage, because men get all these benefits of social support, but they are not responsible for the kids." And the truth is that explanation holds up. That for women, relationships are burdensome and that a lot of women get their emotional sustenance not from their husband, but from other social ties. So that the husband tie is not all that health protective. It's actually more burdensome than beneficial. For men, since men are not socialized to get, to have these emotionally nurturing relationships with their friends, their relationship with their wife is the most supportive and nurturing and intimate tie. So they do benefit from that, more so than their other relationships. Even that, it's hard to even call that feminist. It's like the lowest level of feminism possible. Women suffer. Hello? Welcome to society? So I am not even sure I consider that a feminist argument, it's just logic. What is sort of interesting is to then look at, and one of the things I have become interested in since then, is looking at whether the fundamental dynamics of same sex relationships are different or similar. Because a lot of the dynamics that are both health protective and health detrimental, in terms of conflict in marriage and support in marriage, depend on or at least research within a very familiar gender dynamic. The best example of this that I can throw out is demand withdrawal pattern in conflict where the wife is demanding, "why don't you ever do this and your never responsible for..." and the husband, because men are socialized not to really like these sort of conversations, are like, "no." You end up, with the wife being shrewish and nagging and the husband withdrawing and it's a very traditional gender dynamic. We have no idea whether the implications of those patterns are different for same sex couples. Is it less annoying to have your partner withdraw from you if you are also a withdrawer? Because you were both socialized as men and you both like to avoid conflict? Maybe that's less aversive if it's familiar. Conversely, with female/female couples, I feel like on a personal level, as well as a professional level, I can say that over processing isn't necessarily a good thing.

{1:07:02}

That all that intimacy and all that let's talk about this and let's analyze this down to the ground, may be very good for a heterosexual couple, in which the man is not socialized to do that, but in a same sex female couple may not be such a good thing. So a part of what I am trying to do now, in some of the research I have done recently, has been applying that sort of psychophysiological research to same sex couples. To look at whether there are basic dynamics of those relationships that are different than heterosexual relationships and what that can teach us about the way gender lives in the interaction. It is not a property that you have, it's a property that you make in interactions with another person.

LG: I can't wait to read that research. I wanted to talk a little about the awards and honours that you have received. Most recently, Outstanding Achievement Award, American Psychological Association Committee on LGBT. Can you talk about which award is the most meaningful to you and why? You can reflect on the awards and honours in any way you want.

LD: It's hard to know, because I feel like the award process always seems kind of arbitrary. I feel that I have won a lot of awards and I don't necessarily think that means my work is so much better than that of my colleagues. I feel like I have benefitted from the visibility that I had and I feel like that is a sort of an unfair advantage. Sometimes I feel guilty about. There are people whose work, I think is just astounding and I have no idea why they have not gotten as many accolades as I have. The whole topic makes me kind of squeamish, because I feel that like my work has been spotlighted so my name is on the tips of the tongues of people who are like, "oh, let's nominate her for this." And yet I see so many of my colleagues doing startlingly brilliant work that doesn't get as well recognized. For that reason, I don't get too invested in the whole award giving process, because I feel like it is somewhat arbitrary. But, to that degree I think the award I feel most strongly about is an award that was given to me by my colleagues in my department, the Irv Altman [Distinguished Faculty] Award. No one else knows about it, except for the people in my department, but it reflects the fact that someone in my department thought well enough of me to nominate me and that other colleagues, the people who know me the best, the people who know my work the best, because they live with me, they are down the hall from me, that they decided that I was worthy of this. That means a lot to me because these are the people I live and work with. These are the people who have seen me in my best and worst moments. They have evaluated my record. They have seen things that have been rejected. They have seen the grants that I have not gotten, they have seen bad drafts of things. They have shepherded me to when I was very new and green until now, so to have their respect and admiration, that was the award that brought tears to my eyes.

LG: And what was that award for?

LD: That's a sort of a mid-career award that is given to an all-around faculty member for excellence in research in honour of a retired member of our department, Irv Altman who is a very distinguished social psychologist in his own right.

{1:10:45}

So they oriented toward mid-career people, the idea being that these are folks who have gotten to a point where they have really made a contribution, and they are not done yet. So the fact that they put me in that category of you have done a great job and you are not finished yet meant quite a great deal to me.

LG: And what about a teaching philosophy?

LD: Oh, I feel like every time people ask me about teaching philosophy I just make stuff up, because I am someone who just flies by the seat of my pants. I think that my instincts are good enough and that it has worked out really well. I have written teaching philosophies and I honestly felt like I have just made them up after the fact. I never really went into teaching with a philosophy other than the more engaged the students can be the better. But, I have taught huge lecture classes and I have taught small discussion classes, and I have taught everything in between and I don't feel like there is one right way to do it. For example in the lecture classes that I teach, I believe that there is a place for lecture. There are people who say "oh, lecture is bad, received wisdom." No, there is some stuff that people need to know and sometimes the most efficient way to communicate it is to lecture at folks, but to do it in a way that is dynamic and interesting. For me if I am doing a lecture it needs to be storytelling, it needs to be a narrative. There needs to be characters and events and you need to bring people in to what is exciting about your topics, so that is about as philosophical as it gets for me is just make sure that you are telling a story, an interesting story, a story that you want to read. In terms of discussion classes just basic good old feminist empowerment. Everyone needs to be heard and try and create a climate of safety and a climate of openness and work really hard to keep the balls rolling.

LG: What about mentoring? Have you had any mentors? I didn't ask you earlier who were you're mentors?

LD: For teaching or research or both? My mentors in graduate school were Ritch Savin-Williams and Cindy Hazan, both whom are very, very different but, I am still close to Ritch in particular. We still co-author work together and it's hard to identify what exactly I got from them, but they were truly like parents. They just push you and when you mess up, as you inevitably do, they just pick you up and keep you going. I try and model that for my own students, in terms of just being...and I probably err too much on the side of this, I am unabashedly nurturing to my students, because that is what I got from them [Ritch Savin-Williams and Cindy Hazan] I got a lot of nurturance. Being a graduate student is very vulnerable and very terrifying and there are some faculty who are just very, very hard on their students. I am tough, but I err on the side of nurturance. I feel like there is going to be plenty of people who kick their butts and make them feel crappy later on. If I am going to be really, really hard on them I need to be unbelievably warm, so that they feel very safe coming to me and being like, "I actually don't understand this analysis that I did." If they are afraid of me, they will never say that, and if they don't say that I can't help them. I got a lot of that unbelievable warmth especially from Cindy Hazan. She was such a mother figure for me in graduate school and she had a lab climate that was just the most warmest wonderful intellectual climate that I have ever experienced and that I have tried to recreate for my own students. {1:14:59}

LG: It sounds like you do have a philosophy. Can you, you've talked about this a little bit, intersections of gender, ethnicity, race, sexual identity in life and in your career, and maybe related to that if you have experienced any discrimination?

LD: I have to say I really haven't. I feel that I have been very fortunate. Academia is a great place to be a queer person, because academia is incredibly politically correct. So I do feel like sexuality research continues to be marginalized, although I haven't experienced personal discrimination, I have experienced over the years being in a marginalized area of research. Especially as a graduate student doing research on LGBT issues when very few people were doing it at that time, there was not much of a sense of community. I would go to meetings like APA [American Psychological Association] or I would go to the Society for Research on Adolescence and I would look at all the kind of conventional research that was going on and I felt so not a part of that world and I felt like I am not doing what everybody else is doing. I am doing this weird stuff and I don't know if it is ever even going to get published in the normal journals, I felt like what am I doing? I don't belong here, I am not comfortable here. And that was extremely difficult, because I... it ended up changing. There is a community and it has grown quite a bit, but at that time it was still fledgling. There was Division 44 [of the American Psychological Association], there were still those communities but they were small and at least, there were no other graduate students doing that, they were all kind of established people, so it was not like I could hang out with those people, because they are established professors, you don't hang out with them. There were no peers that I could really hang out with who were doing the sort of work that I was doing, so that just felt very alienating and very lonely at that time, which is part of why it was great to have someone like Ritch [Savin-Williams] as my advisor, because it felt like you and me against the world. Every time I felt like, "what was the point of this all," he be like, "oh, no, no, there is a point to this, there is a point to this." So that was incredibly important for me to have that support from him. It was a very marginalized experience and I still think that sexuality research still is sort of ghettoized and I think that is true for ethnic minority research and I still think it's true for gender studies to some extent. There is mainstream psychology and then there are these niches and the assumption is that that work must not be as good, because it is in that niche area and for that reason I have been extremely aggressive over the years in publishing my work in very mainstream outlets, to sort of hit people over the head with like, this went through the very same peer reviewed process of every other *Developmental Psych[ology]* or every other *JPSP [Journal of Personality and Social Psychology]* article goes through. Its not in *Feminism & Psychology*, or it's not only there, it's not just in *Psych[ology] of Women Quarterly*, it's not in the *Journal of LGBT Social Services*, because that, although I believe that there is a role for those journals. I was like, "gosh darn it, I am going to prove that this body of work, this whole field belongs in mainstream psychology. It is mainstream research. We are doing everything that you people want us to do, there is no reason not to publish it."

LG: That was strategic for you? Strategic choices made?

LD: Absolutely, because it bothered me. I was already feeling the marginalization and I feel like the only way to fight that is a) do work up to the standards that you know is being asked for and b) just convince folks that it is up to those standards.

{1:19:01}

That is hard, because it takes a lot longer to get stuff published in those outlets and certainly that first developmental psychology piece I published went through I think four revisions...four! I mean, hello. But all the time I was I was like I just I have to keep trying, keep trying and it was the right decision, because it did raise the visibility, not just of me personally, but of that body of work, and I think that now that we are in a very different place now and I do think that there is more legitimacy granted to LGBT scholarship, but that marginalization still exists. The marginalization of sexuality, in general, within academic psychology still exists. Right now, I am co-editing with Deb[orah] Tolman the first ever APA Handbook of the Psychology of Sexuality. It's like, what year is it? What year is it? There has never been a handbook on the study of sexuality? It boggles the mind, but that tells you about the squeamishness of our culture around issues of sex.

LG: You mentioned *PWQ* [*Psychology of Women Quarterly*], *Feminism & Psychology*, Deb [Tolman] with APA. Have you had any involvement with [APA] Division 35 [Society for the Psychology of Women]?

LD: Over the years, yes and no. I have gone to AWP [Association for Women in Psychology]. I feel like part of the downside of having so many different identities as developmental psychologist, social psychologist is that if I went to every meeting that applied to me. So I used to always try and go to AWP and then it just got to be too much. There was the sex research meetings and there's LGBT things. At some point I just had to pare things down. I feel like I have a foot, and I am a member of Division 35, but I am often not as visible as I would like to be just because I am sort of over taxed.

LG: The talk today, is which division?

LD: Well, it's a plenary, so it's not attached to a division. I finally made it out of the divisions and into the true mainstream.

LG: Okay, I have just a few more questions. How do you navigate personal and professional demands in your own life?

LD: I don't know. I feel like, I make it up as I go along. There is no easy answer to that. It definitely got easier after I got tenure, but before that family time and work time, I mean thank god I do not have children. I see my colleagues with children and I just don't know how they do it. I can barely maintain my own health, and the health of my relationship, but if there were small children running around, I would be a basket case. One of the things that I think is great about academia is that it is a flexible job. I have written most of my articles between the hours of 2 a.m. and 7 a.m., because that is actually when I am freshest. And I have a job that allows me to do that. I basically stop functioning after one in the afternoon and I have a job that allows me to do that and that has made it kind of easier, but it's tricky, it's tricky. As I have gotten older, I'm very close to my sister's kids and they are 7 and 10, family has become more important to me, and my parents are getting older. I frequently remind myself that I love the work that I do, but it is not like it is rocket science, it is not like I am changing the world in like a significant...

{1:23:03}

The point being, that the importance of it is not enough to neglect the people who are the most important to me in my life. If that article does not get written right away, because I am spending more time with various members of the family in various states of crisis, well that right now in my life is a higher calling. I seek more balance now than I did in the past. And to some degree I am more comfortable with it because I have had a chance to get the work that is important to me out there and to...I have had an impact and I have gotten stuff out so I can sort of rest that to the degree that I had a message that I was trying to get out there and I did. So I can relax a little bit and spend more time on family, because I don't feel like "oh my god, I haven't done what I meant to do." I have had the chance to do a lot of what I wanted. I am not done and there are still other directions to go in, but I feel a little calmer about time than I did.

LG: And so kind of related to this question, any advice you would give to a feminist entering the field of psychology today?

LD: I would say, establish the pattern of life that you want right away, because this fiction that, "oh, I will just torture myself and my family while I am graduate school, and then later on when I get a job I will figure it out, or after I get tenure I'll figure it out." That does not happen. As soon as you start graduate school, you've started your job and if you don't figure out right away how to make it all work together, you won't. In the meantime, you will ruin your marriage and you'll ruin your family. I was lucky enough that I had enough moments of that that I worked very hard to achieve some sort of balance. I didn't always succeed and it has gotten easier over time, but I did not go through graduate school thinking well I will just burn myself down to the ground and all my relationships and fix it later. I'm glad I didn't, because I don't think that works. I have seen people's personal lives and their health fall apart. So my advice is don't just imagine that there will be some rosy day in the future where you can suddenly decide to achieve balance in your life. You have to figure out what your values are immediately and see if you can try to achieve them, because habits are hard to break. If you develop a work habit that is destructive to the rest of your life, it is going to be hard to break that habit after six or seven years, it's going to be pretty entrenched.

LG: Okay, any other advice that is not related to balance or anything else that you have about in general feminism and psychology, the merging of the two, entering the field?

LD: I would like to be able to say that folks should seek out mentors, but I am really disappointed in the lack of feminist psychologists of my generation and one generation above that are out there. I think we have done a pretty bad job of training feminist psychologists and so we have created a situation where we are not producing them. Jobs get opened up and there is no one to fill them and I am not sure what to do about that on a disciplinary level. I mean in terms of advice, if there are any budding feminist psychologists out there to receive this advice, the first thing I would say is bless you! Bless you child! [Laughs] Do not give up! Because the truth is there are not enough of them. We are not doing a good job of producing them.

{1:27:03}

I don't know completely why that is, but I am very concerned about it and maybe it's time for Division 35 and Division 44 [the Society for the Psychological Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues] and SPSSI [the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues], which has a lot of feminists in it, to collectively get together and figure out what is wrong with the training that we have somehow given folks in psychology the impression that being a being a psychologist and being a feminist is not possible or not compatible, because I think to many folks are coming away with that impression.

LG: Yeah, that's interesting. Part of the purpose of this project is to actually document the history of feminist psychology, so we have interviewed dozens of psychologists across the world actually, feminist psychologists, talking about their trajectories. That reflection is very interesting, as we look at the history and what is happening.

LD: It's like there is a certain generation, we get younger and younger... they are disappearing.

LG: Do you have any thoughts on why that is? Culturally?

LD: I think one of the things that I think is happening, at least within academic psychology, the pressures to publish empirical work sooner and sooner and sooner and sooner, in your trajectory of graduate study is so great that students do not have the leisure to explore side interests, to take theory classes. Taking classes at all is like a waste of your time, you ought to be in a lab doing research. So the demands are getting higher, which makes it really impossible to give folks the time and space to do the sort of deep thinking that feminist work requires. There is no real solution to that. I mean if you want a job, you really do have to start publishing earlier. It's hurting not just feminist psychology. It's hurting the theoretical training within psychology overall, so it is bad on a number of levels.

LG: So what would you like to see happening in the field of feminist psychology, even in your own field, or in your own research?

LD: I would like to be surprised. I feel like, I am most excited, in the same way that when I encountered that class by Lauren Berlant where I was like wow, I can't even follow what is going on, I am having to work hard. What I want is to see work that is so new that I have to stop and get my head around it. That's what I would like to see. I would like to see some. I would like to pick up an article that is like, "wow, oh my god." That is what I hope for.

LG: Is there anything that I haven't asked you about, about yourself or your career that...

LD: No, I am worried about time actually. So no, and if the answer was yes, I would probably be like, "oh, it's fine."

LG: Well, thank you very much it was a fantastic interview.

{1:30:02}