

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

**Interview with Deborah Tolman**

*Interviewed by Leeat Granek  
San Francisco, CA  
August 8, 2007*

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**Interview with Deborah Tolman**  
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DT: Deborah Tolman, Interview Participant  
LG: Leeat Granek, Interviewer

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LG – How and when did you first develop a feminist identity?

DT – In college I had several roommates and one of my roommates was a very committed, politically active feminist. Identified as a feminist, and was always trying to enlist the rest of us. We were tolerant of her but we weren't really going there. And she ran the grill at our dorm—we had a grill—and she ran it as a collaborative. Because of course, she *would* run it as a collaborative. It didn't make any money, and it lost some money. I tell you this because it's part of the setting.

LG – Where is the setting? Which college?

DT – Harvard University, Mather House, The House Grill, which is on the bottom floor. So it's a kind of ugly concrete building with a grill in the back and little tables and stairs which go up to the other public spaces.

My interest in sexuality had preceded my interest in feminism and I was doing a paper for a class on the history of sexuality with Allan Brandt—who just wrote a fantastic book on the history of smoking—and I was comparing the ways in which sex was described in the Kinsey Report on women and in the Hite Report. Which was published in '76 and this was in 1983. And I'm reading the Hite Report and I got to a part of the Hite Report that described how essentially missionary position sex was really not particularly conducive to women having pleasure or orgasm. And all of a sudden everything Helene had said clicked. It was just that one paragraph, page 136, and I said "Oh my God, I'm a feminist! I get it!" And I ran down to the Grill, where Helene was working, and Thania was eating the profits. And I said "Helene! I'm a feminist! I'm a feminist! I get it!" And I'm carrying around my Hite Report, showing her on the page what it was. And she burst into tears! And I burst into tears! And we celebrated by eating a huge amount of her homemade Bourgogne cheese.

So it was a very memorable moment and also completely connected to sexuality, which is where my intellectual commitments had started out. So it makes sense to me in retrospect that was the context where feminism suddenly became clear. And of course once you see it you never stop seeing it—basically gender inequities was what I saw—it's been there, ever since.

LG – Did you have any involvement with the feminist movement after that turning point?

{4:15}

DT – I was never involved in NOW or any organized feminism outside of psychology because I was really on an academic track. I did work at places that contributed knowledge—because I wanted to do research, I knew that—to enable feminist activists to do the work that they were doing. I did attend the Scholar & Feminist Conference but not the one in 1984 that was about sexuality, I attended a different one, but again that is sort of at the crossroads of activism and academia—At Barnard. I was living in New York at the time. I worked at the Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI) which was the research group affiliated with Planned Parenthood. So not a very feminist organization but certainly a context in which I could see how *not* having a feminist orientation really limited the questions that were being asked, and thus the information that was being gleaned. So like noticing that none of the people—mainly men—gathering abortion statistics had never been in an abortion clinic and saying there’s something wrong with this, there’s more to the story than this.

And at the same time I did a lot of reading, and at the time the things that were really being focused on, particularly about sexuality was pornography. Take Back the Night was just starting to get off the ground, radical feminism versus liberal feminism. Within sexuality, these were the conversations and arguments that were going on. It was called The Sex Wars—is anything a woman wants sexually, is that female sexuality or is it impossible for women to know what they really want because we’re all walking around with these false consciousness? Which is essentially what Catharine MacKinnon argued and Susan Griffin argued: that the only way we can really know our sexuality is leave the society and just live as women and then we’ll find out.

So I read and read and read. Because I had a nine to five job so I could read a book a day, and in New York you can go to all these used book stores—and since I had no money at all—get a used book for a quarter. I immersed myself in that. It was always an intellectual pursuit for me as opposed going a go out stand out on the sidewalk sort of experience. At that time in New York there were feminists on the street really fighting against pornography who had these blowups of Hustler magazine, one particular Hustler magazine cover, which had a meat grinder with a woman being put into it, trying to collect money to support the movement. There was a group, F.O.A.P. I think their name was, that was trying to do that work but had some very strange bedfellows, very conservative folks who wanted to ban pornography, to ban sex! Feminists were aligning themselves with them because they wanted to ban these terrible images of women—never a good idea, always goes wrong! So that was the context in which I came up.

LG – So what drew you to psychology? You said that your interest in sexuality predated your feminist turning point.

DT – Yes, and I majored in history and literature in college. I think I was always simply interested in psychology and my interest in history and literature was extremely psychological. I was interested in motivations, and books that dealt with sexuality in one way or another. I did a lot of reading in Victorian English literature.

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In high school I had a boyfriend who introduced me to Victorian pornography, which was actually very available. It was a magazine called *The Pearl*, that had been pulled together and published as a book. Frank Harris's autobiography. So I had this other, very decontextualized, exposure which raised questions about sexuality—sexual freedom and choices. What does this all mean when you think of it in terms of sexual identity? I didn't have a feminist critique of it, I was very interested in the portrayal of agency, or what I thought was a portrayal of agency at the time.

LG – How would you say that you merge your feminism with the work that you do in psychology? The topic in itself is a feminist topic...

DT – Well it can be; it can also be very much *not* a feminist topic. If you meet some of these people in sexology who are measuring the lengths of people's digits to see if it's associated with their sexual identity, believe me there's not a lot of feminist theory. There's no theory at all!

I read Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* as a senior in college and became really interested in her work because it resonated with me, as it did for so many white, middle class women like me. I decided I wanted to study with this woman, that's what I wanted to do next. In the interim I got a master's degree in sexuality education at the University of Pennsylvania as a part of my plan to become a sexuality researcher.

At Penn, Michelle Fine was there. We had gotten connected by the guy who ran the sexuality education program, she was in New York, I was at AGI. So we got together, she asked me bring her some publications, cause AGI put out a lot of publications, and I showed up with like 5 linear feet of family planning perspectives and everything else I could find. And so began a very long collaboration and friendship that continues to this day. I took her psychology of women class. I think I was introduced to feminism through the lens of psychology in that context.

I mean, when Carol wrote *In a Different Voice*, I don't know that she would have identified herself as feminist. What she was doing was feminist. What she was doing was say "Look, we're basing all these theories about people on work with men, and when you listen to women you hear something totally different. So instead of fitting them as low scoring into this scale that's been based on men's experience, let's listen to what women have to say." So she was very much a part of that epistemological movement arguing that we need to listen to women speak about their own experience to start to understand and make sense of women's lives. So I applied to Harvard School of Education because that's where she was, got in, deferred, went.

LG – Two questions. How did you choose your topic? You said you were always interested in sexuality but you did adolescent sexuality. And what in your view is a feminist orientation towards sexuality? As you say it can be very non feminist. What makes it feminist?

{13:38}

DT – I think what makes it feminist is believing that women have a right to their own sexuality, their own feelings, their own choices and behaviors. Behaviors that don't hurt other people—unless that is agreed to—and to do so in a way that's safe and nonviolent. And I mean all of those things very broadly.

The adolescent part—I had been working with a researcher during undergrad who did work on children. But I was a camp counselor, so working with adolescents in that context. When I was at AGI, the big topic was “Oh my God, we're having an epidemic of teen pregnancy!” So there was a certain discourse available to fit my interest in sexuality. When I got to Harvard I was thinking about doing something related to adolescent pregnancy, because that was what people did when they were interested in sexuality in those days. It was all about helping teens—girls—not get pregnant. And I had a very top down attitude, I was a good white girl and I was going to help those poor girls who for what ever reason were not able to protect themselves. They should have the right to make their own sexual choices. So I came at it with that attitude. And there was someone who was in Carol's group who had some same interest in the same issues, particularly about pregnancy, but more and more about sexuality and so we were able to work together. So my ideas sort of solidified there.

In 1988, (I started school in '87) I started thinking about what was I really interested in focusing on. By then adolescence and sexuality had really become connected for me. I was interested in women's sexuality. One obvious question is: how do women get like this? I think developmental psychology has always interested me because I have always wanted to know why. When I was a kid people used to make fun of me because I always wanted to know “why? why?” When I was at camp they used to call me “Reasonable” because I have always wanted to know the reason. What is the reason for that? What is the reason for this? Justification, which is such a big part of one's existence as an academic has always come very naturally to me. As it turns out, it's very useful. Turns out it's a very good fit.

LG – You work at two centers, the Human Sexuality Studies Program and the Center for Research on Gender and Sexuality. What's the difference between these two institutions and what do you do there?

DT – They're actually not different. At San Francisco State there was a program called the Human Sexuality. There was a change in leadership in that program six or seven years before I ended up there and Gil Herdt, who was an anthropologist who has done very important work in sexuality, particularly around male homosexuality and anthropology, was at Chicago but came to take over this program. The person who had run it was retiring, John Techecko and he was going to make this a really rigorous, intellectually compelling, important program, because there really wasn't anything like it.

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There was the sex ed program at Penn that I had been at but it left after the guy who ran it retired and they didn't hire someone who did sexuality. So that got taken by Bill Staten and

Connie McCaffrie to Weidner University where it's a small program that focuses on religion a lot. There had been a program at NYU that was run by Ann and her husband, Mary Calderon was there, and that sort of closed down, too. So outside of medical schools or schools of public health, or programs in the humanities (which really don't have much of a conversation with the social sciences, unlike the reverse, where the social sciences are very conversant with a theory coming out of the humanities), there just wasn't any training for the social scientist to become a sexuality researcher.

And there's a bit of hysteria in sexuality research which is pretty amusing, because it's a group of very distinguished older, white gentlemen who fear that as they age that the field is going to die. I was actually at a meeting where they were complaining. And I was looking at myself, thinking, it's not going to die, it might look different than you. So that's a bit of a disconnect. It's not a huge field, the study of sexuality, because it is such a difficult field to succeed at in academia. You're so up against it, anyway, as a feminist, as a psychologist who doesn't do quantitative research, either at all or exclusively. That's true in all these different areas, the topic is still marginalized, and it can be that the methods are marginalized. Certainly, less so now, but feminist theory, unless it's attached to some other "respectable" psychological theory, is marginalized.

LG – So these two institutions are...

DT – They're one. The Human Sexuality Studies Program, which Gil Herdt started is part of the school of arts and sciences in San Francisco State University. When Gil got there he was really very entrepreneurial and wanted to start some sort of institute or center, in part because he's had a long history of that. And the Ford Foundation at the same time had a bit in sexuality, which meant that they were going to really infuse a lot of funds into issues around sexuality. There were six resource centers that Ford said they were going to create. They identified six individuals in six different countries. And Gil was the person in the US to develop a resource center for sexuality at San Francisco State University, part of the Human Sexuality Studies Program, which is part of the school of arts and sciences.

When I came, I was actually succeeding Rafael Diaz, who had been in the program but was recruited into another college at San Francisco State University to run a different institute. And he had been in the process of developing a research center. And so when he left and I came in I was essentially given the task of developing a research center which I called the Center for Research on Gender and Sexuality. It was actually broad enough and interpretable enough to incorporate the research of the faculty who are part of the Human Sexuality Studies Program, which is now a department.

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So we're the Department of Human Sexuality Studies and the center is the sister center to the National Sexuality Resource Center (NSRC). Together we constitute an institute which currently has the garbled name the Institute on Sexuality, Social Inequality and Health, which is a part of the Department of Sexuality Studies.

LG – And you run...

DT – I'm the founding director for what we call the CRGS, the Center for Research on Gender and Sexuality. And you get me at a very interesting and momentous time because I am going to be leaving San Francisco State to follow my husband to a new position. And so I will be landing somewhere new, in New York.

LG – Do you know where you are going to work?

DT – No. I'm having a lot of really wonderful conversations with a lot of people. And given my personal academic history it's a very new experience for me to have people actually be actively interested in having me be part of their faculty.

LG – You've also done research on participatory methods including qualitative research approaches, such as narrative methodology and participatory action research. Can you talk to me about the development of these ideas and what your involvement was in using these methods, how that came about?

DT – Well, primarily I'm the narrative side of that. You're referring to the handbook on narrative methodology and participatory action methods in psychology, and Mary Brydon-Miller is the participatory action person. So well I have done some participatory action research, I don't think of that as something I have enormous expertise in. But she and I were put together, I can't even remember by whom, to do a book to demonstrate that both narrative and participatory action research was a part of psychology because we had both had the experience of being told that that we weren't psychologists. That psychologists didn't talk to people. I actually had someone say to me "How could possibly learn anything about people by talking to them?" Really! I swear to God! *Not* a feminist psychologist.

LG – Clearly!

DT – So that's how those two methodologies got put together. And we together identified psychologists doing both narrative and participatory work. So we created this handbook to show: here's how people do it in psychology. And that was with NYU Press that we did that book.

I was trained in narrative methodology at graduate school with Carol Gilligan, who had very much gone to narrative methods by the time I got there. Made a lot of sense to me—I majored in history and literature! I didn't have unlearn any bad psychological habits, that was how I thought about psychology.

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It's a very clinical approach, it's essentially asking people to tell stories about their experience with the epistemological grounding being: people's lives are stories. That's how we live. We live stories. And what are the stories that people tell, that is, how have they lived their lives? And of course those stories can change at any moment in time but at that moment

what is it that they say about their experience? And a powerful way to answer that question is by asking them to tell stories and helping them to tell stories.

As a narrative methodologist, I feel my job is to facilitate people's ability to tell a full story about their experience, given that I am trying to help them answer my question. Not just my research question, but also my question. We don't have... I hate the word probe, I will not use that word. For so many reasons, it just makes me crazy! But follow up questions is what I think of them as, because literally it is about following the person! I have a very general set of questions that I like everyone who is doing an interview to ask, just so that we cover the same ground, but it's more about following the person so that they can tell the story they need to tell about what I want to know. So for that reason alone, and that's how I was trained, I developed an interest in narrative psychology.

And at the same time I had great antipathy towards quantitative approaches. And that would be one of the contexts in which I was physically restrained in grad school. Sitting in the front row of statistics class just so furious—you can't measure that; how do you know that's what it means? And as I have matured, I have come to appreciate quantitative approaches but at the same time to appreciate the funny way in which the negative underbelly, the vulnerabilities of the quantitative methods are rarely talked about. If we just talk about the vulnerabilities of all of our methodologies then we can pick and choose and in fact put them together in order to maximize what any methodology can bring to understanding whatever it is we want to know.

LG – Can you tell me a little about the research that you did at Wellesley College's Center for Research on Women?

DT – That turned out to be a lovely landing spot for me. I graduated in 1992 and it was the first time in my life that I was not able to be successful. Which was quite painful. I couldn't get a job. I absolutely could not get a job. I sent out 50 resumes, CVs. I had thought I'd done everything right. I'd published, I'd spoken at juried conferences, I'd studied with Carol Gilligan, I had a book contract with Harvard University Press. No. Nothing. Nothing. Over the course of two years I got two interviews. One at Hunter College and one at Stanford School of Education. Neither of those ended up producing jobs, in part because there were two mindsets about what I was doing. One was this is fabulous, this is brilliant, this is the cutting edge, this is where psychology is going or this is completely heretical, this is not psychology, either topically or methodologically and this person doesn't belong in a psychology department.

Having my degree be a doctorate in education, which is a complete artifact of Harvard, has not helped, frankly. Anyone else who had done the work I had done at a school of education would have a Ph.D.

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It's just a little idiosyncrasy of Harvard and anyone who knows anything knows that. But everyone doesn't know everything, so many people are very puzzled, I think, by that. But



that seems to have evaporated over time. But really I could not get a job. I went to Stanford, and it all looked rosy and fabulous and in the end they wanted to hire two of us. And they tried to get another line and it didn't work, and they offered the position to the other person, because math was more important in sexuality. Rafael Diaz who had been on that faculty and moved toward sexuality from language acquisition, he left, because it signaled to him that he wasn't going to be able to do sexuality and he went to CAPS [Center for AIDS Prevention Research]. So I had no job, which was really quite awful, I mean my husband had been waiting for me to bring in some income, and I really wanted to bring in some income, too. I wanted to work, but I was not able to.

I met Nan Stine who is a person who has done a lot of work on sexual harassment in secondary education. And we had a lot to talk about. She had just been working on this study for *Seventeen* magazine and she had written narratives that she wanted me to take a look at. And they had a visiting scholar program (at Wellesley) and I got sort of squeaked into that. Which was great that I had an office, which I shared with five other people (although they did eventually give me my own space) and a telephone, and the all-important thing in academia: an institutional affiliation. So even though I wasn't making any money whatsoever, I had a place, and I had a title, and I had a business card. And that meant a lot to me, because so much of my identity was in the work that I did. It turned out that my interest in sexuality research, particularly in adolescence, was in line with Wellesley's The Center for Research on Women's strategic plan. And so they allowed me to submit a grant, which was funded, and so I ended up at Wellesley, and I was there for eight years and had multiple grants.

LG – And you were continuing with the sexuality studies?

DT – All of it was sexuality studies—there was one study that was about gender equity in classrooms from the Spencer Foundation but other than that it was sexuality. Which looked different in different guises, you can't just always say "I'm going to do a sexuality study!" Risk of unintended pregnancy—that's where I started formulating that idea of femininity ideology and developing that measure to see how that affected risk of unintended pregnancy. Well, that's really having sex without protection... I think of myself as a little bit of a guerrilla, and a little bit of a whore, and I am perfectly happy to be either of those things, to do the work. So I don't promise things I can't deliver but I realize that a linear path, even in this day and age, is really not going to get us to a research project that is a feminist project about sexuality.

LG – You mean an academic linear path?

DT – Actually I'm thinking more about funders, at this point. Because once you're at a place like Wellesley, all you think about is funders, because no one pays your salary but you. So that does become a practicality. And it actually turned out to be a wonderful turn in my career. I was very, very glad. I had children, I was able to care for them.

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They were on the daycare center on campus, they called me up to nurse, I would drive over and nurse them. I had a lot of flexibility, I didn't answer to anyone, except myself. I was able to publish; I was able to go to conferences. So it ended up being a very wonderful experience and I still have very strong ties to The Center for Research on Women, and I always will. It is a really fantastic, wonderful, wonderful place. And it has always been a refuge for feminist scholars, 'cause we've always needed one.

LG – Ok, publication question: You've had a prolific career publishing books and articles. Which publication are you most proud of and which do you think has had the most impact? (They may not be the same).

DT – Well, I guess part of it would depend on what kind of impact because I think that different publications have had very different kind of impacts. And I feel that I've brought two things to the field, one is just learning about adolescent sexuality from a psychological perspective. And I'm very much a psychodynamic, psycho-social, socialization, internalization kind of psychologist—you can't really pigeon-hole me because developmentalists tend to not really be like that. And social psychologists tend not to be like that but part of what I'm interested in is how society gets into us. How do we become compliant with femininity norms? So I'm less interested in whether you check them off on a piece of paper and much more in the process is being reproduced, over and over and over again. And we're seeing it now, in an amazing way, even as women are getting more and more powered, it's very difficult for them to take it up and part of that has to do with the fact that we are still being socialized in these particular feminine ways that make it very difficult to take up power—it's still a very patriarchal organized world.

So, publications—I guess my book was a big achievement. It was an albatross for a long time, it was a hard book to write. It started out as a dissertation and became much more over the time that it took me to write the book. I was very fearful, it was hard for me to write it. For a long time I was terrified that Newt Gingrich was going to come after me. There was really a very strong conservative political presence, so that was scary. That was part of the reason I published it with Harvard Press, I wanted the prestige and credibility that Harvard gave. And I've always been very strategic about all the decision I make—I do things... there's always a reason. So that was my reason with going with Harvard.

So that has been an important publication in part because it's impact has gone way outside psychology. To mothers, and teachers and other women who are working with kid. And men too, fathers, and so that kind of influence has really what I've been hoping for. I was initially thinking about becoming a feminist therapist, and I did train clinically, which was actually very good for the sort of research I do, but decided that it wasn't enough impact. It was too much effort, too few people, not enough impact. And so that I am very happy about, I think it has been helpful to people, and certainly in ways that I never anticipated.

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It's funny because in psychology, in the academic world, it's all about the articles you publish. And I've had colleagues who have been told not to publish books. But ultimately it

really is books that make a difference. And I think it's because a well written book gets beyond psychology. And I feel, particularly because it is adolescent sexuality, I'm obliged to go beyond psychology, it's not enough for me to convince some psychologists that this is important

LG – Yeah, I wanted to ask you about that, too. I notice that you write a lot for the popular press: *The New York Times*, *Glamour*... Can you tell me a little bit about that?

DT – Well, I don't write for them, they call me. I talk to them.

LG – But that's unusual.

DT – Well, I write the way I talk, so that might be part of why you thought that? Because I really do believe in writing in an accessible way I do not think that writing an academic journal, even, is an excuse for poor writing. Actually the other paper that I think has had a really different kind of impact has been *Dimensions of Desire*, which I wrote with Laura Szalacha. It's about using qualitative and quantitative methods together, and yes, we reported on findings about girls' experiences of desire, using both qualitative and quantitative methods *together*, but I think that people use that mostly as an illustration of how those methodologies can very meaningfully be utilized, together. Because different questions require different methods!

So sometimes I have students who come to me and ask "How do you do interviews?" And I say "Why? What do you want to know?" I think our ability to answer a range of questions requires that we have the ability to use a range of methodologies. So that's a paper that I think has made an impact and I've been happy about. People have told me it works well in class, they've been able to use it in grants to the Federal government, trying to get more qualitative work into Federally funded grants, and qual-quant is pretty much the way it goes these days. Not necessarily, but most of the time. So I would say those two.

The one I recently published, I'm hoping will have an impact, called *In a Different Position*. Which is a very funny title, I've been trying to use that title for years! I had a friend who thought I should call my book "In a Different Position" or "In a Sexy Voice," was another suggestion. But it really is actually a very good title for the paper, it's about some theoretical work that I've been doing on how gender inequities from psycho-social perspective, in heterosexual institutions, including relationships, are reproduced. So that's really what I'm interested in.

And as I've started incorporating boys into my studies, which I was sort of forced to do because I would go to schools and they would say "Well, you can't just talk to the girls. So I'd say "Okay, okay, I'll talk to the boys."

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And then I had two boys, like all other good feminist psychologists. Have you noticed this? Except for Lyn Brown I can't think of anyone who has a girl. Clearly, a higher power is

telling us that what we need to make the world better for girls is do something about boys! This tweaking or diddling around with girls is, if you think about it, so ironic, that here we are again, trying to fix girls to fix this problem. And girls are a part of a larger system, which does affect their individual lives and experience. So I'm hoping that that publication will be of interest and I'm ready to write another book that will be sort of organized by that development.

LG – Do you have a teaching philosophy?

DT – Do I have a teaching philosophy? I have philosophies about what not to do. I don't like to lecture a lot, I like to lecture some. I like to know what my students want from me. Sometimes what they want me to do is explain what the hell these terms are in Foucault's *History of Sexuality*. I work very hard to try and think of embodied, engaged things that we can do as a class to understand whatever it is that we're studying. So I like to do small group activities, because I like everybody to have a chance to participate, and some people won't talk in the big class but they'll be an active part of a small group. I'll give multiple different kinds of assignments that I grade on, because I think people learn differently and produce differently and I want to give people a chance to show their best ability. And being graded: I try to be transparent, very clear about what I'm doing, why I am doing it. My syllabus always has a logic and I always explain the logic to my students.

LG – Do you supervise students?

DT – Yes, I have master's students, currently.

LG – Okay. Any philosophy about supervision?

DT – It's hard to work with me. Really anyone who wants to work with me, I'm a very demanding supervisor. You have to be able to make an argument, you have to be able to justify it. You have to answer my questions before I think of them. But I'm also very helpful. Most of my students write about four drafts of their master's thesis before it's accepted. Actually my first year at State one of my students presented me with—I love this thing—it's a collage. She cut out comments I had written, which I write very illegibly, which I'm trying to do better on, on all the drafts of her thesis, and she cut them out and she made a collage of sort of the most funny and pointed ones. “Are you really going to include this in your thesis?” and “Justify this!” or “What's the point?” And it's really very, very, very funny. But I show it to all my prospective students and I say “this is what's going to happen to you.” And most students do very well.

LG – Did you have any mentors?

{45:13}

DT – Yes, I've had a lot of mentors. Michelle Fine has probably been the most important but least public of my mentors, not everybody knows that we have such a close relationship because she wasn't my advisor. Obviously Carol was a mentor. My peers when I was at

Harvard were, and some of them remain mentors. Lyn Brown, in particular. We mentored each other, I think, at this point. You know I've felt a great deal of support from the women who do sexuality research. Anca Earhart, Julia Hyman, who is a psychologist, she now runs the Kinsey Institute. Janet Hyde has been a very surprising and phenomenal, from a far, I would think of her more as someone who is encouraging as opposed to mentoring. I never really worked with her but she's always been very positive and has always encouraged me.

So I feel like I've been very fortunate and Division 35 has been a fantastic place to be. I really, really like being a part of Division 35.

LG – Okay, can you tell me a little bit about your involvement in Division 35?

DT – A couple of things. I was on a task force on being successful doing research on women, doing funded research. And that was an excellent experience. I think we got some good information out to people. What else have I done?

LG – Well, the Task Force for the Sexualization of...

DT – Yes, most recently I was on a very high commitment task force, a task force on the sexualization in girls and women. I think originally, I don't know what it ended up being. That was a very rewarding experience. And a challenging experience because we were a very talented, and in some ways very different group of psychologists trying to hash out one narrative. So that was a great learning experience.

LG – Apparently it's had the most hits out of any task force. 350,000 hits, we were told yesterday.

DT – Oh, wow, I didn't realize it was up to that. That's great. They've done a great job too, of getting the word out. The APA is an amazing organization that way. And that was not a Division 35 task force. That is an APA-wide task force. The APA has a committee on women in psychology, which is not a Division 35 group. And it is out of that group that the... I can't remember what it's called when they...

LG – Oh, the Program for Women?

DT – Yeah, it was through the Program for Women. But there's sort of a 'called for' task force, where they have to do an official call. And here's a statement of the problem, and what they want the task force to do. And that has to go through all kinds of levels of approval. And that's the way I came from. There's a lot of complaining, there's a lot of worrying out there. What's really going on?

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What does psychology know, what can psychology tell our society about this apparent sexualization of girls? And it's enabled us to identify a lot of things that we don't know that we need to know. And I think we were able to identify enough work to be able to state that it

is not good for girls and women. But that we need much more research done before we are able to understand and answer that question fully.

LG – Which accomplishments are you most proud of and why?

DT – My children. Because they're fabulous relationships and are the center of my life. I always remember that what I am doing is to make the world a better place for them. I take very seriously my responsibility raising two men and that's been a lot of fun and very difficult. So that would be it.

I think now I'm also very proud of mentoring the next generation. I sort of feel like I am at that point in my career where I'm really starting to teach other people to do what I know how to do. I am really good at writing grants, and I really love writing grants. I know it sounds odd, but it's true. Because it's all about justification! It's the ability to think about what are people going to ask and what are they going to want to know and figuring it out ahead of time and answering it. You know, it's really fun. And teaching people who are excited about doing that work and are talented to do that work. So how do you do feminist research in a world that is still pretty hostile towards it? And the answer is: "There are ways! There are ways! Let me show you what they are."

LG – What would you like to see happen in the field of psychology in terms of the research that you do?

DT – I would really like to see the people that I train go out on the market and get jobs without it being some crazy, horrible process. I really want people to be able to not have the experience I had. Which was really, really unhappy and frustrating, again, I think it's all worked out great. In the end it's worked out very nicely, but it was a very hard process to go through. And ironically, whenever I went to these interviews, and I think I had a total of three or four in my life, the students were so enthusiastic and so excited and so wanted what I could bring to them. And the faculty were so afraid or upset or disgusted or dismissive. And I would like for the faculty to be more responsive to their students and think of psychology more dynamically than they do.

It's not a static thing. There's more to psychology than the Big Five. And there is a lot of ways that psychology can develop and be at the forefront of what's happening now, which is the move to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to these questions, which makes all the sense in the world and I don't see psychology going there very much. As I am in the process of looking for a new job, I'm not really looking at a lot of psychology departments. There's a few, but they're pretty famous for being way out there. So I would really like to see psychology embrace the power of what feminist research can bring to the field and what we know about people and how we can make the world a better place.

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LG – Related to that question, what kind of barriers, obstacles, discrimination have you experienced because you're a feminist or because you're a woman? You mentioned you

weren't able to find work right afterward but it wasn't clear whether that was because of your feminism or because of your research topic.

DT – It was because of my topic, which was a feminist research topic, particularly how I approach it. It was because of my methods, which are feminist methods and have feminist explanations, justifications and epistemologies. Absolutely. Absolutely. And I always speak to my audience—the importance of speaking to one's audience cannot be underestimated, and so often I am not speaking to a feminist audience. And so often I have to think about how to bring them to me. That we're not starting where I am, I have to start where they are. And so I don't always get to go as far forward as I would like in a paper or a piece, because I have to start so far behind!

I would like to see feminist psychology be a standard part of the curriculum in psychology and I think more and more it is. I would like to see feminism itself, not be so fractured and be in better conversation with the various different philosophies about what feminism is. It's in a sort of odd place right now and I'd like to see psychologist be part of that conversation.

LG – Any barriers or discrimination specifically because you are a woman?

DT – You know it's so hard for me to know, because everything is so confounded by what I've done that I don't feel I can make that argument. I have had some interesting experiences as a senior person. I was hired at this job at State as a full professor, and going in to talk to the provost or talk to the president,

And it's probably a combination of me being very young for my position and also I don't tend to look my age. Which has held me in excellent stead as a researcher, although I don't think the kids think I'm twenty anymore (they thought I was their age). And I think these white men look at me and see their daughters. I am their daughters! And so when they interact with me, when I need something, it's like their kid is asking them for something. So again, it's confounded by age. So you know, what is being a woman? It's being more than a woman, so that's a hard question to answer because people perceive me as what I am—middle class and Jewish. I have friends who are from a working class background and who are almost never perceived that way because they've entered the middle class, that's not who they are. Would they be discriminated against if people realized who they are? Maybe. Probably. You know, my husband is Puerto Rican; most people don't know that. People have asked when I've applied for things, they've asked other people, if I'm African American, because I'm interested in children of color. So I can't really say I've had this that and the other, I have had experience with sexual violence, because all women have. On the job, now.

LG – How have you balanced the demands of your personal life with your professional life?

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DT – I have a big philosophy about this. This word juggling? Juggling? Really a huge lie. Big lie. Juggling suggests you can actually do it. Like you could actually keep all the balls in the air successfully. And I think it's impossible. So it's a constant, constant source of stress,

from demands by people and by my family, and internal demands. I don't believe in guilt around this, so I don't feel guilty but I do feel enormous stress. Knowing that this balance is not achievable has helped me, so I'm really seriously against that idea of juggling. It's more like ball dropping.

LG – What advice could you give to a women working in feminist psychology now? What remains to be accomplished in the field?

DT – Oh, God! What *doesn't* remain to be accomplished? You know, the questions that we've been asking continue to be powerful questions. I think a lot of it depends on where you are coming from in psychology. Social psychologists ask very different types of than, say, environmental psychologists. I think the understanding that feminism is really about humanity rather than just women and girls, that it's about boys being able to lead fuller, more embodied, emotionally ranging lives. To be able to have more humanity in their relationships with other people and the world around them. To motivate the sort of social change that we want. And to see feminism as addressing gender equities and gender inequities but that if we look across different domains that men and boys—then again, this may come from raising boys—are denied aspects of their humanity, different aspects than girls and women are, but still, denied aspects. That is not serving us. And this notion of privilege is also very limited privilege for a very few people and so studying boys with an assumption of this certain kind of privilege that they are not going to have, sets them up. I think that's feminist work.

LG – And advice you would give to a feminist woman working the field?

DT – Get a mentor. Get several mentors. It's a political landscape and the better you are at the politics, the more successful you will be. Feminist psychology is a community, it's a great community—be a part of a community. No one does anything by themselves and if they say it, they are lying.

LG – Okay, it's one o'clock, so I want to respect your time. Is there anything else that I haven't asked you about? About yourself, about your career, about feminism, about psychology, about the discipline, or that I haven't mentioned that you feel is important for me to know or that you would like to expand on? Anything at all.

DT – Well, there's one little anecdote that I think is important, that I haven't told. And that again, goes way back to graduate school. As I became more interested and focused on this question of girls' sexuality, and in particular their desire, the roots of that question came out of my own experience of having very strong experiences of desire and having them be very positive experiences.

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And when I started to do the research in this area, of course you start by doing a literature search, and there was one paper, which was Michelle Fine's *Missing Discourse of Desire* and I feel that the field has moved. And so asking about girls' sexuality and sexual desire has become more of a legitimate question to ask and not like people looking at you like you're



completely insane. Or people saying “Oh, romance and love, that’s a great topic!” And I’ll say “No. How old are your daughters?” Inevitably they were men with daughters who could not even hear the question.

And we only know what we ask, and no one had ever really asked so we didn’t know. And I really thought that all we’d have to do was ask and, like my own experience, I was going to enter a secret garden of sexual desire and pleasure that we didn’t know about. And I was so stunned when that wasn’t what we found. And increasingly stunned as I recognized, where in my own experience that wasn’t the case.

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