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**WOMEN AT THE CENTER:
HISTORY OF WOMEN'S STUDIES
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE**

TAPE LOG

Roberta M Golinkoff holds the H. Rodney Sharp Chair in the School of Education at the University of Delaware and is also a member of the Departments of Psychology and Linguistics. She was active in helping found Women's studies.

Name of person(s) interviewed: Roberta Golinkoff

Other people present: None else present

Interviewer: Kenneth Adams

Date of interview: May 16, 2012

Location of interview: Interview took place in home of Roberta Golinkoff

Special conditions (noise, interruptions, etc.): No interruptions

General description of contents: Educational/familial background. Discusses her experience as a women in the academic world, any inequalities she felt. How she came to UD. Started own support group of women academics who faced similar issues she did. Importance of mentors. Impact of religion on gender issues. Balancing motherhood/family with career. Supporter of WOMS department at UD even though don't really teach classes or do research specifically in gender studies. Women in the workforce, how her teaching style empowers women students

Recording Format and disc number: Video interview

Total Running Time: 37:22 minutes

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TOPIC SUMMARY

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0:03 Introduction of Dr. Roberta Golinkoff, summarizing accomplishments, publication of 12 books, journal articles, recipient of Guggenheim Fellowship, development of the Infant Language Institute.

0:54 Early life in Brooklyn, New York and influence it had upon later life and educational choices. Childhood in a family of four living in a two room apartment in Brooklyn; strong early message about importance of education; cites the influence of uncle who was a psychologist as well as a cousin, both engaged in clinical side of psychology; She was more interested in the experimental and developmental side. Worked as a research assistant at Brooklyn College (with Gary Balin shaped her later research interests.

2:18 Family background, Parents focused on survival; political activity was limited to concerns over how policies and social movements would affect Jews. Discussion of political activism in Jewish community.

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3:32 Discussion of education at Brooklyn College. Largely a matter of economics. The student body was much like her: lower middle class students with a bug for learning. Her graduate education was fully funded.

4:12 Interest in early childhood learning developed as graduate Cornell with George Souci regarding early language acquisition; fascinated with how much is occurring in infants developmentally that they cannot express through speech.

5:01 Her first child was not born for another 10 years – notes that though well versed in developmental psychology; she learned the practical aspects of rearing a child like all mothers – on the job.

5:31 Mother's assistance with the earliest years of her own children's lives. Parents were not that active in her education though they felt it was important. Notes that she encountered sexism within her own family, e.g., she was not allowed to go out of town for study because she was a girl. Mother's expectation was that she would become a public school teacher so she could have her summers off to rear her children. Fulfilled her mother's wishes but at a different level. Didn't make her very happy; it took a good deal of time for mother to understand that she was devoted to her career and would continue even after having children.

7:18 Discussion about religion. Family was basically New York Jewish; she was not bat mitzvahed because she was a girl though her brother went through it. Had to learn a great deal on her own when her own children went through the bar/bat mitzvah process.

8:24 Discussion about when she become conscious of women's issues: coincided with her position as a TA in her second year.

8:57 Women who were influential to her? Professor of the course in which she was a TA, Joy Osofsky and Betty Friedan; fledgling women's studies area – the readings for course which she was a TA had a tremendous impact on her outlook.

9:34 Does not recall any specific consciousness raising groups active at Cornell, though they may have been present; notes that she formed her own group when she came to U.D. in 1974.

9:59 Did she face any specific discrimination as a woman? Worked in the Department of Human Development which was predominantly female. One particular male professor underestimated the abilities of his female students in terms of professional placement, and she confronted him about this in later years. She did not feel any difficulty in advancing as a student, but couldn't speak from a faculty perspective.

11:44 Discussion about field of Human Development: largely women, so career options were not as limited as they may have been in engineering or other typically male-dominated fields. Equal opportunity language starting to appear in employment advertising in the 1970s, but cites a particular ad which she kept for many years which stated flatly that a man was sought for the position.

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13:07 How did she come to U.D.? University was seeking someone with her specific credentials: psycholinguistics, reading, human development. Discussion about issues of salary and evaluations. Up for tenure after 4 years instead of the regular 6, so had a sense of her standing within her area and the field.

14:21 Discussion of status of women at University at the time. Does not recall specific percentages, but notes there have been (fairly rare) occasions where she perceived a discomfort among colleagues with her tendency to be outspoken on certain issues, especially because of her gender; Does note an institutional sexism and racism in the numbers of women and minority faculty members, particularly in positions of higher authority. Cites numerous studies which show a societal tendency to evaluate the credentials of a female employment candidate more harshly than a male, and suspects that this pattern is true for African-Americans as well. Discussion about how she responds to opposition.

17:03 Asked if ever labeled due to her outspokenness. Not personally concerned with labeling, though she agrees that assertive women are seen as outside the norm. Would like to believe that in academe all are evaluated equally, but isn't true since the academy functions within the larger society. Acknowledges that the battle is not yet over.

18:11 Discussion about being pleasantly surprised at being warmly embraced as a friend by the Department Chair and head of Graduate Studies (Lou Mossberg and Frank Murray) who treated her as an equal and served as career mentor. Was the only woman tenure-track faculty member in the department; noted a gradual change in the number of women colleagues but it was certainly clear at the time.

19:30 How did she deal with being only woman faculty member? Reached out to female faculty members in other departments and met on an informal basis to discuss personal and professional issues which affected them as women; names Ann Hudson, Lindy Geiss and Marcia Halperin among the participants. Discussions focused on what it would take to succeed as women – mentoring about career and tenure issues, etc. Was a great forum for airing important issues. Got involved with establishing the Women's Studies program to ensure that women on campus had a distinct feminist voice.

22:24 Discussion about involvement in WOMS in terms of teaching: Taught only one course in the area on Women in Education, but reiterates her support of the Department.

23:09 Discussion with colleagues about women's issues.

23:41 Reaction to the assertion that Women's Studies is not a legitimate discipline? Feels that the discipline needs to exist since the majority of what is valued in the academy are the achievements of males. Women's Studies tends to promote a more encompassing view.

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24:50 Asked if feminism has informed her own scholarly work. Notes that most of her work is focused on language acquisition and cognitive development, and has not engaged in specific research on gender in this connection. However she feels that issues of gender are always present in the background, and is pleased that she works on a campus where women's achievements are valued. Points to own experience as a graduate student as a model of how Women's Studies courses can shape a student's outlook on the world.

26:09 Discussion of her courses and research. Students are highly perceptive in countering the research of established professionals with their own research insights. Feels that her influence upon young women through these channels serves much the same function as teaching an 'official' Women's Studies course.

28:49 Asks what most notable achievements within the Women's Studies area and the status of women on campus in general. Influence primarily as an advocate for the program across disciplines; notes that she was part of early committees to form the area, but sees her role today more as a supporter in the background.

30:01 General impressions of the Women's Studies program and its influence on campus life? Happy to see the program flourishing, and notes that many friends of hers, including Beth Haslett and Marian Palley have headed up the program. Happy work of women is highly valued at the University. Cites the formation of the Office for Women's Affairs under President Trabant as an effective deterrent against sexual harassment, and hopes that these efforts are actively continuing.

31:29 Discussion about graduate program Women's Studies.

31:52 What can a future Women's Studies scholar to learn from her? What advice would she offer a young woman embarking upon an academic career? Gives advice. Suggests a young professional woman should seek a support group of others facing the same issues, including the balance between career and motherhood. Stresses the importance of not forcing those entering the profession (both women and men) to choose between family and career, despite the fact that the standard for achievement has been raised considerably in recent years. Also alludes to the importance of the right spouse in career development.

35:54 Has 'had a wonderful ride' and has felt valued in her role at the University. Women's Studies and other ethnic/gender studies should remain separate rather than being rolled into a broader liberal arts curriculum to highlight the unique issues which attend to these affiliations.

37:15 Concludes by thanking Dr. Golinkoff for her time.

37: 22 END