

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

TAPE LOG

Dr. Kate Conway-Turner is Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at Hood College in Frederick MD. She has served in a variety of leadership and administrative positions and as a Professor of Psychology at five universities. She was the Director of the University of Delaware Women's Studies Program from 1993 to 1996.

Name of person(s) interviewed: Kate Conway-Turner

Other people present: No one else present

Interviewer: Marie Laberge

Date of interview: March 20, 2014

Location of interview: In Dr Conway-Turner's office at Hood College, in Frederick, MD on March 20, 2014

Special conditions: There were two technical problems with the sounds in the interview.

General description of contents: Covers personal background and education; Move to Delaware and involvement and work in Women's Studies Program at UD; reactions of students to Women's Studies classes; significant leaders in Women's Studies at UD; Role as Director of Women's Studies program and effort to get a major; importance of diversity in the University and Women's Studies; struggles around financial issues, developing faculty lines, work after leaving UD; changes in the field of Women's Studies and the successes and failures of the field, still struggling to recruit male students, bring diversity into the classrooms, address issues of economic diversity; impact of work in Women's Studies on her current position in administration.

Recording Format and disc number: Video

Total Running Time: 1:15:20 min

Page 1 of 6

TOPIC SUMMARY

Counter No. Contents

00:00 Background information: Grew up in Clarksville Missouri, small-town along the Mississippi River. Very small town, rural farming community, working class to poor community. Was the second oldest of seven daughters. Discussion of growing up in small town. First-generation to complete high school and

TAPE LOG CONTINUED

Counter No.	Contents
-------------	----------

get a college education. Was avid reader which opened doors. Teachers encouraged her to go to college. Only college educated people she knew growing up were teachers or doctors. Applied to several colleges; was accepted to all the colleges she applied but University of Kansas gave the biggest scholarship. Discusses transition to the large University coming from such a small town. Interested in sciences, wanted to major in zoology, possibly medicine. Majored in microbiology, minor in psychology.

09:00 Discussion of graduate degree in Psychology. Had a minor in Psychology, worked for a year as a med tech in Kansas City. Was encouraged to go to graduate school. Visited faculty at University of Kansas for advice about graduate school. Biology advisor said you could have your own lab, Psychology advisor said you can do whatever you want. Broad perspective of Psychology professor led her to choose career in social psychology. Received a Master's and Doctorate in Social Psychology, did a post doctorate at UCLA in Public Health, looking at how psychology impacts disease in different groups.

12:50 Question about what led her to look at the psychology of women and family systems. Come from a very female centered family, enjoyed sitting with older women, talking about their lives and family history. In Master's and Doctoral work focused on women's issues. When started teaching, chose to focus teaching psychology of women, intergenerational relationships, and the impact of outside factors on women's health. Not a lot of information about women's experiences in different areas in the health field. Realized she could make a contribution and was interested in it.

14:56 Finished Bachelor's degree in 1976, Doctorate in 1981. Did postdoctoral work at UCLA; first teaching position was Santa Clara University in Santa Clara, California.

15:22 Move to Delaware. Heard from James Jones, psychologist at UD there was an opening at UD. California was expensive, had two young children and going through a divorce, so was looking for a better family context. Position at Delaware fit interests in intergenerational relations and family focus. Arrived in Delaware in 1986.

16:39 Involvement with Women's Studies. Almost immediately people were aware of her. Sandra (Harding) and Maggie (Andersen) always had their radar out for new faculty members who were doing research related to women and teaching in the area of Women's Studies. They were both very inviting and excited about her classes. Seemed like a natural fit, and happened almost immediately after she arrived on campus. Was a wonderful community to be part of as a new faculty member, for number of reasons. There was a consistent understanding of impact of gender on various factors, and a group of people to explore academic interests and questions with, as well as a wonderful source of senior woman with advice on navigating a new campus, and mentoring, which was important for new faculty.

19:03 Question about any resistance from the Psychology Department to her involvement with Women's Studies. Had a joint appointment with the Psychology Department and the Individual & Family Studies Department. Did not see any resistance, would only have been resistance if she wasn't carrying weight in home department. "As an administrator now I often work to protect new faculty members but in my own transition to new faculty, I took on more and more and juggled."

TAPE LOG CONTINUED

Counter No.	Contents
-------------	----------

20:39 After a few years at UD, was on the Advisory Committee to the Director of Women's Studies which opened access to the women across the University involved in Women's Studies. Would discuss curriculum, the minor, possibilities of a major, and vet new people at the University.

21:43 Question about the reaction of students to her courses. By and large they were positive; the courses she taught drew certain students. Did not teach any intro to Women's Studies courses, but had conversations with people who did teach them. Because these courses fulfilled the multicultural requirement, they often had people in them who were difficult and reacted negatively to Women's Studies. Her courses were ones people chose because they were interested in them. Occasionally had comments about spending too much time on a particular topic, but did not get a lot of pushback.

23:18 Question about the significant leaders in Women's Studies at UD and the impact they had. The strongest voice was Sandra Harding, director at the time. She was consistent, tenacious in promoting Women's Studies. Other senior women were strong voices. Carol Hoffecker in History Department was a strong voice for women in History; would strategically put herself on committees that needed to have that voice. Maggie Andersen was also a strong voice. Quite a few people who had senior status could dare to continue to push an issue, whereas junior faculty had to be more careful. Did not feel the administration with either pro or anti-Women's Studies, they just didn't care. Were more concerned with potential negative press.

25:46 Recalls when she was Director of Women's Studies, 1993 to 1996, Mary Richards was Dean of Arts & Sciences and was very supportive, understood the importance of Women's Studies and of the discipline and its impact. The Dean can have a major impact in assisting Women's Studies.

26:43 Discussion of work as a Kellogg's Fellow from 1990 to 1993; was a leadership program drawing on people from across the country. On her return from being a Kellogg Fellow in 1993, was full of excitement and energy, Sandra (Harding) was leaving (as Director). Thinks Maggie Andersen asked her if she would serve as Director. Was interested in inculcating a greater feeling of diversity in Women's Studies. Many people got diversity and the intersections of race and class but many did not. Thought her academic background and lived experience could help. Was appointed Director. Very interesting times.

29:20 During this time, Women Studies was recognized as a major; had been discussed for a long time. Many people on the advisory committee didn't think it was time, she thought "if not now, when?" Had conversations with chairs, and did not see major resistance. When it came for a vote, there were two minor questions and then it was voted on and "was a splendid accomplishment." Students had wanted to major for years, had been possible through a self-directed major but it was not easily done. The major helped students to understand that what was said in class was real, and a legitimate discourse and area to study. Was a morale boost for students and an easier path for those who wanted to major in Women's Studies. Immediately had majors as well as double majors. In first year, six students graduated with a Women's Studies major.

TAPE LOG CONTINUED

Counter No.	Contents
-------------	----------

32:40 Also during her period as Director celebrated the 25th anniversary of Women's Studies at UD, had a big celebration and wonderful reflection of the first 25 years.

33:20 Saw an increase in the number of women of color coming into Women's Studies, students. By having a visible representation of a person of color, it allowed women who might not think it was for them to come into the major. A few years later her own daughter was double major in Women's Studies and Anthropology.

33:58 Question about obstacles such as finance. "We always struggled with finances. In some ways we were so good at doing so much with so little that it almost acted as a negative with the administration." Discussion about need to get cosponsors and working with so little. Programs had a small budget. Discussion about how going to department would change the budgeting process.

35:30 Faculty was always an issue, had a major but did not have any full-time faculty. Had two half time faculty at the time. Discussion of expanding their lines and the struggle to fully plan for the future. Discussion about debates about fairness and full-time positions and its impact with the current faculty. Resource issues had consequences for advising, teaching, and mentorship needs in the program.

37:36 Offices were located in Smith when she was Director. Discussion of current location.

(Interruption on tape)

38:46 Question about how it was possible to do so much with so little resources. Women know how to do a lot with a little and would ask for more and then made do with that they had. Women know how to collaborate and network. Put on very nice programs with very little. The excuse was that we didn't have a major and we were not a department.

40:15 Question about diversity in UD Women's Studies. It seems like we're the same place when she left but Women Studies attempted to be a welcoming place for diversity. It was an easier space than other spaces on campus. Wasn't perfect and varied depending on who you are talking to but it was a more welcoming space. Would advise new faculty who had any Women's Studies interest to enter the space because they would not get the negative "isms" thrown at you.

41:52 People have very different lived experiences and there were very few women of color in the Women's Studies community. Discussion about the difference between theoretical level analysis of diversity and cultural distinctions and the ability not to react to the long-held "isms". Was far from perfect but was a community that attempted to understand and appreciate diversity. Discussion about the importance of reflecting on diversity and biases, and being able to acknowledge the issues and personal impact on people's biases. Many departments were male dominant and hard for women to break into, even harder for people of color. Diversity brings a fuller understanding of whatever is being discussed. The resistance to acknowledging this was significant, sometimes around gender, sometimes

TAPE LOG CONTINUED

Counter No.	Contents
-------------	----------

gender and different ethnic and racial backgrounds. The few people who were willing to say there is another way of doing this were often punished.

45:00 Was a wonderful experience, "I feel I grew up academically at Delaware," learned many things, but when she left in 2001 there was still a lot to be done to embrace and understand diversity on campus.

45:30 (Technical glitch – Pause in sound)

45:45 Discussion of reasons why she left UD in 2001. After left Women's Studies as program director, spent a year as AC Fellow and then returned to UD as an Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences. Another opportunity arose and went to Georgia Southern University as Dean of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. Thought it was time to test her wings in administration. Discussion of making the transition from full-time faculty to administrator and impact she could have. Was in Georgia for three years.

48:36 Left Georgia to go to New York as a Provost (at SUNY at Geneseo) and then to Hood College in Maryland.

48:45 Discussion about changes in the field of Women's Studies. Recalls as director of UD Women's Studies bringing in courses on men and some resistance to these classes. Was not surprised by the name change, had been discussing it in the 1990s. See similar changes in other departments. Sees changes as positive for the field. Discussion about the issues raised in Gender Studies. Also seeing a disturbing trend which is students not seeing the need for Women's Studies and considering it "retro." Gender continues to be an important lens. This "retro" perspective can have a significant impact on programs and departments on campus. Many come to understand the importance of it as they enter the workforce but at that point it's too late for the campus. Have barely broken the glass ceiling and the illusion that gender issues have been addressed is troubling.

54:01 Question about the successes and failures of Women's Studies. As a field, and also at UD, Women's Studies has allowed for an understanding of the intersecting nature of a lot of fields. Discussion of the importance of having science courses in Women's Studies, to provide a different perspective for students but also keep the scientists engaged with gender. Allows students to be well-prepared.

Also have failed to engage significant numbers of men. Discussion of men taking courses and then discovering it is a Women's Studies course and how valuable it was. Enriches discussion to have more men in the classroom. Also continue to have more work in terms of diversity. Discussion of mobility and diversity in the classroom as a result, bringing in an international and cultural variety of people and perspectives.

58:20 Another area that Women Studies reflects on but needs to work on more is economic diversity. In college, vast majority of students come from fairly privileged backgrounds, and it is the unusual students that come a very poor background and can feel isolated. Institutions need to do a better job of

TAPE LOG CONTINUED

Counter No.	Contents
-------------	----------

understanding economic differences, including it in our discussion, integrating it into courses. Women's Studies is well poised to look at the intersectionality and therefore it should be easier to incorporate these issues, rather than have it be addressed in one class lecture or guest speaker. Recalls discussing the issue with a sociology professor at UD and a conversation with a graduate student, who described how the discussion about economic diversity distanced from the lived reality of the situation. Need to humanize the issue.

01:01:07 Believes we should all be lifelong learners and push ourselves out of comfort zone. Nobody has it all right and it's a journey, which is not over. Quote from Eleanor Roosevelt.

01:02:28 Question about the impact of Women's Studies on her current position - Provost and VP of Academic Affairs. Helps understand when sexism is in the room, to understand the roots of it and also how to address it. Helps with awareness of the need to address different layers of understanding. What seems obvious to Women's Studies community is not obvious to others. Prepared her to understand the ways sexism is perpetuated and the intersections with race and class. Is very patient and that has been very helpful. Discussion of importance for Hood College Women's Studies faculty to have a Provost who understands the issues. Discussion of instituting family leave policy at Hood College for faculty. Importance of developing a kinder gentler institution.

01:01:47 Question about her work with Haiti organization. Working since 2004 with organization called HOPE, a humanitarian organization. Discussion of the work they do in Borgne Haiti, helping in three areas: health care, education and sanitation. Her particular focus is on education, discussed. Projects include helping students have access to schools, teacher education programs, developing a library in the area. Takes students to Haiti on spring break.

01:14:30 Years at Delaware: Women's Studies was a wonderful community for me, was a safe community, always encouraging. Excited that it continues to grow and hopefully will make whatever changes it needs. It has a history of being a wonderful community for faculty, students and staff on campus. It was a wonderful second home.

01:15:20 End of interview