

PRESERVING MEMORY: NEWARK AND RUTGERS
IN THE 1960'S AND 1970'S

An Interview with

DOROTHY DINNERSTEIN

Conducted by

Gilbert Cohen

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INTERVIEW: Dorothy Dinnerstein

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DATE: November 20, 1990

GILBERT COHEN: This is Tuesday, November Eleventh, and this is Gil Cohen.

[Break in Recording]

This is Gil Cohen. I'm meeting with Professor Dorothy Dinnerstein in her home in Leonia, New Jersey. This is November the twentieth, 1990. Dr. Dinnerstein, who retired from Rutgers University in 1988, has been a full-time faculty member in the Psychology Department since 1967. And prior to that she was a part-time adjunct faculty in Rutgers in Newark. And I guess to start it off, Dr. Dinnerstein, let's go back to the sixties before the new campus was built, which, of course, was a big turning point. And how would you describe the old Rutgers-Newark campus to some future historian?

DOROTHY DINNERSTEIN: It was.... as I remember, it was an old warehouse. It was incompletely converted from a different use, a factory or warehouse. The rooms didn't look like classrooms. Is that what you're asking for?

COHEN: Yes, yes. Exactly. Yes, yes.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes.

COHEN: You said the rooms didn't look like classrooms. I mean, what did they look like?

DINNERSTEIN: [Laughs] If I'm right—I could be wrong—but if I remember rightly, they had...very high ceilings and large windows of a loft or a factory building. And the furniture was movable.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. How were the facilities for teaching?

DINNERSTEIN: Okay.

COHEN: Uh-huh. Yes. How was it in terms of the location within the city? How did you feel about that?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, it was interesting to get to know Newark. I had never been in Newark until I came there. At that time I lived in Manhattan and commuted on that little line that runs between Manhattan and New Jersey. What is that called?

COHEN: You mean PATH.

DINNERSTEIN: PATH.

COHEN: PATH, yes. Mm-hmm. Yes, yes.

DINNERSTEIN: I commuted on PATH. And I was imported...to teach an experimental psychology course, which apparently didn't exist before I was there. Or it wasn't handled by somebody who had done experiments. I think the department when I was there consisted of Danny, who was starting a program with Ed Burns, and George Smith and Bill Somebody who had a sort of consumer research program. So, they were interested in quite concrete, many of them commercial projects....Some part went to the university and some part went to their salaries. They supported themselves by grants from commercial companies who had reason to want to know about consumers' response to their advertising and so on.

COHEN: Those were the beginnings of the Institute of Animal Behavior?

DINNERSTEIN: No, that was the part that wasn't animal behavior.

COHEN: Oh, I see, the Psychology Department.

DINNERSTEIN: That was.... the Psychology Department, as I recall it, the two full-time members were these two people who did consumer research. And then there were part-time people. And I can't remember who those part-time people were, but I was one of them, and I was imported to teach experimental psychology.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. I see. Now, at that time, the new campus was being planned. My question is, what role, if any, did you have in the planning at least either of the campus or in the planning of the facilities for your department, for the Psychology Department? Were you in any way involved in that?

DINNERSTEIN: No.

COHEN: None. It was just sort of given to you.

DINNERSTEIN: Well, maybe Danny, who had a very big stake in the planning of the new building because his institute was going to be housed in it.

COHEN: In Smith [Hall]?

DINNERSTEIN: In Smith.

COHEN: Yes.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes. And he had more experience than I did in how to set up facilities for undergraduate student experiments in psychology.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

DINNERSTEIN: So he probably took responsibility... he had been doing the experimental psychology course. And when he got a lot of money for working with animals, he dropped the students' experimental part of his research, and handed it over to me. And that's why I was hired.

COHEN: I see. I see.

DINNERSTEIN: I mean that's how I originally met Danny and got connected to....

COHEN: So you were teaching the course that he was teaching, was a course in experimental...

DINNERSTEIN: A course in experimental psychology with human beings.

COHEN: Oh, I see. I didn't realize that, I see.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes. And that was the course that he wanted to get rid of because he was now specializing in animals, and he'd gotten this big grant, and he was really much more interested in animals. So....

COHEN: At that time, again on the subject of the campus, were you aware of any alternatives that were being considered for the campus besides what is now University Heights? Do you recall?

DINNERSTEIN: No.

COHEN: No talk of anything at that time. Alright. So the new campus came into being...And I guess my question is, how did the new campus influence your expectations about the future of the college? Did you have any feelings about that at the time?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, as I understood it, it was a developing college. It had been very small and scattered. It hadn't been adequately funded to have coherent buildings. And many departments were very skeletal. And the building of this campus and the funds that the state was willing to put into the building of the campus implied a commitment to a center of education in Newark.

COHEN: And that was your understanding.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes.

COHEN: Do you remember in the early seventies when Horace dePodwin was the acting provost and he made a statement to the board of governors about the need for development on the Newark campus, which created something of a stir in the press about the need for further development? Do you recall anything about the impact of that statement now?

DINNERSTEIN: No.

COHEN: Now in the seventies, what do you think was the impact of the perception of crime in Newark on faculty recruitment?

DINNERSTEIN: There might have been some impact, but I didn't know about it.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes. How about...

DINNERSTEIN: What was the date of the black students' rebellion?

COHEN: Oh, that was in February 1969.

DINNERSTEIN: Uh-huh.

COHEN: February sixty-nine. And the Newark riots were in July of 1967, and that was just during that transitional period.

[Break in recording]

Another mundane—not so much mundane—but what was your perception of the impact of parking problems? This comes up frequently on recruitment, either faculty recruitment or student recruitment.

DINNERSTEIN: You know at that time...I can't remember exactly when it was that I became full time, although you could get that from university records probably...I was not so involved in the affairs of the college. I had another job that I had to finish. I was working for a research center that was involved in a project that I was directing, and I had to stay on to finish it. So I was—and I had a very young daughter, and I was trying to.... I had some marital problems at that time with that daughter's father. And I was just holding everything together with cobwebs. [Laughter] And coping to make the transition over into academic life from this uncongenial market research, which I had taken on only because I had a child and I needed a flexible schedule.

COHEN: Okay. Moving on into the seventies...the whole issue around Smith Hall and charges of its being a contaminated building. The Altman Report, which was a state report that pretty much, I guess, if you recall The Altman Report, the whole...?

DINNERSTEIN: I recall that there was a fuss about the building, and I don't recall the outcome. I think it was sort of suppressed.

COHEN: Yes. What did you feel about that? I mean what were your thoughts about the Altman Report on the one hand, which is a state report pretty much saying it was okay, and then there was a federal report that came out of the Department of Environmental Protection...which I guess differed...with the state report, specifically about estrogen levels. I mean was your office in that building?

DINNERSTEIN: My office was in Conklin.

COHEN: Oh, in Conklin.

DINNERSTEIN: In Conklin? It was in Conklin for a while, and then it switched to Smith.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

DINNERSTEIN: I can't remember. I'm sorry, I can't. But that would be, I think, in records of the university.

COHEN: Sure.

DINNERSTEIN: I know that the estrogen levels in Smith Hall on account of this animal behavior were suspected of causing health difficulties for people who worked there. And what was my perception of that?

COHEN: Yes. How did you....

DINNERSTEIN: I didn't know. I didn't know. Danny was quite sure that it wasn't true, that he had taken necessary precautions, that estrogen didn't just travel through the corridors like that. But I was really at that time very busy. I had my daughter and his two children for most of my free time.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes.

DINNERSTEIN: And I was preparing courses, and I was just a busy person.

COHEN: Let's go back again to, well, a number of questions. How would you compare the Rutgers-Newark campus to other urban campuses that you've seen?

DINNERSTEIN: I really know well only the Brooklyn College campus.

COHEN: Good place. I went to Queens.

DINNERSTEIN: Did you? And I guess I'd say that once the new buildings and everything were put up, they were quite similar, Newark and the Brooklyn College campus, except for the fact that the Newark campus was in the middle of a ghetto. But the students were very similar. The students weren't as sharply selected as they were at Brooklyn College. At Brooklyn College you had to have achieved a certain grade average, a high grade average, in high school. The entrance requirements in Newark weren't as high as those in Brooklyn College.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

DINNERSTEIN: So the students on the whole had a somewhat more primitive education.

COHEN: And Brooklyn, I guess, also had a competitive examination. If you were below a certain grade level you had to....yes.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes. And of course that was a factor in the whole controversy about the introduction—you know the help that would be given to black students to qualify for college education.

COHEN: Then we'll be moving into that. Going back again a bit to 1967, July of 1967 specifically when the Newark riots occurred...What recollections do you have of the immediate effect of the riots? How were you affected personally?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, that was when the black students wanted the college closed—or did that come later?

COHEN: I think you may be thinking of 1969 after the takeover of Conklin Hall by the Black Organization of Students. But this was before. This is July sixty-seven when the campus was just opening up, and there were I believe four days of pretty serious rioting in the City of Newark.

DINNERSTEIN: It wasn't particularly about the college then.

COHEN: No, no. It was—you recall the Newark riots. You may not have been—since it was July of sixty-seven, you may not have been on campus then.

DINNERSTEIN: Well, as I remember, didn't the school close down?

COHEN: In July of sixty-seven?

DINNERSTEIN: It didn't?

COHEN: I don't know. That's something I really should check out myself, when you came back to teach in the fall of sixty-seven.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes?

COHEN: I don't recall—I don't believe there was any shutdown once the semester got started after Labor Day.

DINNERSTEIN: Mm-hmm.

COHEN: Do you have any recollections of what the atmosphere was on campus in the fall of sixty-seven basically almost...two months after the Newark riots in July of sixty-seven?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, I don't remember the months and years precisely. But I know that I thought the black students had a case, you know. That it was outrageous that this college should exist in the middle of a ghetto and exclude the immediate neighbors of the college. And since these students had received their earlier education and lived their earlier lives under great

disadvantage, it seemed to me that a public institution had an obligation to help them overcome that disadvantage.

COHEN: So you're say two years later—I mean actually we're now talking about two years after the riots which were 1967, and we're now into the Conklin Hall.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes.

COHEN: Okay.

DINNERSTEIN: ... Well, what I felt about the riots was that the people were justified in rioting. I mean they might not be the most—it might not be the most sensible or even effectual way of protesting. But it was a way that was available to them, and it expressed their feelings. And you never really can tell what makes for historical change.

COHEN: Yes. So this is your perception at the time that the riots occurred.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes, yes.

COHEN: What went into your thinking to lead you to that conclusion, that there were circumstances which led you to that thinking, that conclusion? What were the conditions in the city, in the country, that you perceived as leading to such an event?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, I can't really document all of the sources from which I got to understand that this was a racist country.

COHEN: Yes.

DINNERSTEIN: But I knew enough black people to know that they weren't mentally inferior to white people, and I felt that they were in a dreadfully unjust situation.

COHEN: Yes, yes. Specifically, concerning the Black Organization of Students and the takeover of Conklin Hall, what do you feel, what conditions, specific conditions, existed in the university to encourage militant action on the part of black students.

DINNERSTEIN: Well, the black students' argument, which sounded plausible, was that they had been undereducated from the very beginning. You know that the black elementary schools and secondary schools had not provided the same education in the ghettos as in other neighborhoods. That their parents were either too busy or too timid or too unsophisticated to protest against the inferior education that their children were getting. So that the ghetto secondary schools did not prepare the students well for college. And so it was a self-perpetuating ghetto.

COHEN: How do you think the civil rights movement and the Newark riots and the assassination of Martin Luther King influenced faculty attitudes about the needs of the black students?

DINNERSTEIN: I don't know because the people I knew well had felt all along that this was an unjust situation. And that the students had come to us with a handicap—well, with multiple environmental handicaps. And those on the faculty who disagreed, I guess I felt they were just uninformed and insufficiently concerned with the fate of other people.

COHEN: What were the philosophical differences among the faculty on this whole question of admissions or on the Conklin Hall takeover?

DINNERSTEIN: Yes. There was a simple notion that you should keep the standards of the college high. So you shouldn't let anybody in who wasn't prepared to do college work. And why it was that black students were not in fact prepared was not something that some of the faculty cared. They didn't care whether it was environment or heredity or what. They felt it wasn't their business.

COHEN: Yes. To what extent do you think that at that time Newark's dependence on the New Brunswick administration for decision-making—how did that hamper the communication, possible communication, between the Newark administration and the Black Organization of Students? Have you any feeling for the administrative relationships at the time?

DINNERSTEIN: No, I don't. In fact I was so ignorant, that I was surprised to learn that there was also a race issue in New Brunswick.

COHEN: Also in Camden.

DINNERSTEIN: And also in Camden. I just didn't know it. All I knew was that I was living in the midst of a ghetto of oppressed people who wanted an education.

COHEN: With the wisdom of hindsight, what do you think now, or what did you think then, could have been done to avoid the Conklin Hall takeover and its aftermath?

DINNERSTEIN: What do you mean by its aftermath?

COHEN: Well, after the students evacuated the building, there were still differences about what agreements were made and not made. And then in March there was a demonstration on campus, and there was, I believe, a fire that was started on the campus, if you recall that. Do you have any feeling for the university's board of governors establishment of the Urban University Program at the time? Does that ring a bell?

DINNERSTEIN: I remember that some ameliorative administrative decisions were made.

COHEN: You do recall? Okay..talking about the amelioration, what were your thoughts over the years about the effectiveness of the Academic Foundations Department in bringing students up to standard in preparation for admission? Did you have any feel for their role at that point in time?

DINNERSTEIN: I really didn't know. The only contact I had with the whole race situation, after the events that we were just talking about, was that I had some unusually good black students; I mean two of whom come to mind now, who are both professors. And they were as good as any students I had. And I was happy that they had had a chance to come to study.

COHEN: These were students that you had in the seventies after Conklin Hall?

DINNERSTEIN: After Conklin.

COHEN: After Conklin Hall.

DINNERSTEIN: After, yes, yes.

COHEN: Oh, on the subject of students again, what other outstanding students did you have, by the way, in your career at Rutgers? You mentioned two students who became professors. What other—

DINNERSTEIN: You mean outstanding black students or outstanding people?

COHEN: Outstanding students, people, you know, black students, others.

DINNERSTEIN: Well, in any year of teaching there would be three or four people that you'd care about. The students...there were students in the New Left period who weren't...well, they were violently anti-academic at that time, if you remember.

COHEN: You're talking now about the late sixties or early....

DINNERSTEIN: Late sixties, early seventies.

COHEN: Early seventies. Uh-huh.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes, yes. There was another takeover of Conklin Hall, wasn't there, by the SDS students?

COHEN: I don't believe there was another building takeover. Their offices were occupied temporarily as aftermaths.

DINNERSTEIN: Classes were called off.

COHEN: Classes were called off for a period, yes.

DINNERSTEIN: Well, some of those people were, you know, conformists who just swam with the tide. But some of them were deeply committed, passionate people of the kind that I remembered from my days at Brooklyn College when I was an undergraduate.

COHEN: You said they were conformists? You mean radical conformists?

DINNERSTEIN: Yes, some of them.

COHEN: That's interesting. Could you expand on that a little bit?

DINNERSTEIN: What can you say? You know. I mean in any group there are leaders and followers. And that's true in insurgent groups as well. And that is a source of instability in the making of social change.

COHEN: Uh-huh. What were some of your memorable teaching experiences?

DINNERSTEIN: Teaching.

COHEN: Yes. What were some classroom situations perhaps you can recall.... Revelations, epiphanies?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, it was wonderful to be with the students. They connected me back with my Brooklyn College days, where many of us were the first people in our families to have gone to college. And our parents were making some sacrifices to keep us in college even though we weren't paying tuition; they were supporting us. And a lot of the students did part-time work outside of school. I identified with the students, although they were ethnically somewhat differently distributed from the ones at Brooklyn College. And, well, another difference was that at Brooklyn College a lot of the students came from family backgrounds that greatly appreciated the life of the mind. And if the parents had not gotten a higher education, it was something they had always wanted. And in Rutgers, these youngsters were sometimes the first ones in their families who had ever wanted, become interested, wanted a higher education or become interested in abstract ideas. So there was that difference, and yet there was a similarity.

[Break in recording]

In between there was this...I had had between Brooklyn College and Rutgers, I had been at Bryn Mawr and Swarthmore where they were very educated.

COHEN: As a faculty member, you were?

DINNERSTEIN: I was there as a research person at Swarthmore and as a teacher at Bryn Mawr. And in those it was really impressive to feel how different college was for these privileged students.

COHEN: Yes.

DINNERSTEIN: With educated parents and plenty of money. And they were also nice people, you know.

COHEN: How would you characterize the.... Well, my first question is, in the *Mermaid and the Minotaur* you mentioned trying out the ideas, your ideas, on students in the sixties—in the

preface to it you talk about trying it out your ideas before you even wrote the book How did the students in the seventies respond to the same or similar ideas? What changes if any did you see?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, they were less shocked by them. [Laughter] And in a way it had become dogma for them, you know, stuff that was new and exciting to— Well, in any movement, original struggles become somewhat dogmatic eventually.

COHEN: What were the students in the sixties “shocked” by—to quote you?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, they were shocked by the—

[Break in recording]

Well, the students—I’m a little fuzzy about the dates of these evolutionary changes.

COHEN: Well, whatever you can recall.

DINNERSTEIN: What happened is that the black struggle was a less fundamental one than the gender struggle. It was more evident to— It was easier for white students to sort of take sides about it.

COHEN: On the gender.

DINNERSTEIN: No, on the black student issue. Because on the black student issue, either you understood unequivocally that this was unjust; or if you were a white person, you could just divorce yourself from the problem. Whereas the gender issue involves everybody. The proposals—the changes that have to be made for black people in this country who are a minority to become part of the mainstream and be integrated are nowhere near so disorganizing of the pattern of life than would be a really comparable change in the relations between men and women. Because it would still be true if we abolished racism completely, that there would be a hierarchy of privilege. And some people would do more interesting work than other people. Some people would...even if we equated economic factors, which of course is a big problem, the life led by people of different races could easily be made similar without changing the intimate structure of personal life. But to change the relations between men and women, you’re really getting to the heart of human solidarity, of human connectedness. Because you’re demanding of people that they connect with their intimates in an entirely new way. And once you ask for equal professional opportunity for women, you’re asking for a fundamental reorganization of the family. So that means it’s a fundamental change in the experience that every infant would have as it was becoming a human being.

COHEN: And so this was the shocking idea in the sixties you were saying? This is the idea that shocked that you mentioned before?

DINNERSTEIN: I think both the idea of racial integration and of sexual equity, both those ideas were shocking. But I think that the idea of sexual equity cuts closer to the bone of personal life.

COHEN: That's very interesting.

DINNERSTEIN: Not that it's any more important. But it just has a different personal impact.

COHEN: Yes. I'm sure that could be explored—you've explored it in your book, and it could be explored—and has been again and again I suppose. Do you have any feel for how student advisement was going on on the campus at the time?

DINNERSTEIN: No.

COHEN: No, you were not involved in that. Any feel for the reasons for the decline in enrollment in the early seventies?

DINNERSTEIN: I didn't see that.... You know I didn't remember there was a decline in enrollment.

COHEN: There...was some decline after an initial surge. You mentioned, when we were speaking about some of the committees, the—did you enter in any discussions about admissions standards and scholastic standing—standards—as specifically about numerical values assigned to whatever student could be retained or not. There were discussions in the faculty on, again, admission and scholastic...standards. And you may have been involved in some of that discussion.

DINNERSTEIN: I don't think I was. I think I was... on a Scholastic Standing Committee at one time. But it must have been a not particularly fiery time. [Laughs]

COHEN: Uh-huh. You don't remember any hot discussions then about scholastic standing.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes. Except around the issue of black students, where I thought, you know, it was very important not to assess a student's competence on the basis of what they did in their first year in college after an inferior education before that.

COHEN: Did you feel that—again coming back to the question of the black students—did you feel that the remediation efforts that were made in the seventies met the need?

DINNERSTEIN: I couldn't tell.

COHEN: How did Newark campus disturbances during the seventies around the war in Vietnam, around the invasion of Cambodia, around the killing of the Kent State students, how did this kind of activity affect your work as a professor in the classroom in relation to the students, relations with your colleagues?

DINNERSTEIN: I don't know. In general I thought it was appropriate for students and faculty to be concerned about large issues of the society. And I didn't think that it was appropriate to—I didn't think the ivory tower idea was.... Maybe there were times in history when an ivory tower

was a good thing to have. But once you have mass education, it seems to me that the problems of the society should be merged really, should suffuse at least the parts of the curriculum from which they have bearing.

COHEN: What justification did you see for, during that period, for campus disturbances? I mean there was a university policy on dissent which I guess, in effect, was an appeal to reason, that things should be worked out. When disturbances occurred, I guess that policy was violated. How did you feel about that, for instance students demonstrating, marking up buildings as an example? Or how did you feel, for instance, about the moratorium? This wasn't so much a disturbance. I believe the faculty declared a moratorium...I believe it was in May of 1970. Did you feel that this was a—how did you feel about that?

DINNERSTEIN: A moratorium? What did that mean? Classes were....

COHEN: To call off classes. I think it was the last week or so before the final exams in May of seventy after Cambodia and Kent State. Do you recall that period at all?

DINNERSTEIN: I'm not very clear about it. I guess I could say that on the whole, I believe that student concern about historical crises is likely to be hot-headed and one-sided. But at the same time, it's generous and disinterested. And so students have in some ways expressed the conscience of a society that people who were already committed to some of its forms, some of society's forms, cannot afford. And so I've on the whole been very sympathetic to students' rebellions, even when they're hot-headed or ill-advised. I think that the spirit of responsibility for one's future when one is young, you know, it's part of growing up; it's very important.

COHEN: Yes, yes. That's....

DINNERSTEIN: And to say that the academy was not the place for that, it should be done somewhere else, is unrealistic because the academy is where the young people are getting together. They're brought together. And they're thinking about big issues. So to tell them to go home and do it in their neighborhood doesn't make much sense.

COHEN: What role did you think the faculty should be playing.... Or at that time, what was the role of the faculty in that discussion, at the time? What forms did you feel at the time the faculty discussion should take?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, the faculty was.... The faculty was debating within itself what actions should be taken. And some people supported the students, mediated between students and the rest of the faculty, interpreted the students' point of view to the faculty who found it shallow or hot-headed or so on. To say, you know, if you were in their position...or something like that.

COHEN: That's quite a period. I wanted to get on to curriculum and change and development.

DINNERSTEIN: I'm wondering about Dolores. Would you excuse me?

COHEN: Sure.

[Break in recording]

I think you were on a discussion of the faculty role in...did you have anything further to say? I think the question I asked was which faculty role did you feel was the role of the faculty in the ongoing discussion on the campus around the war in Vietnam?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, I suppose that the.... What their teachers thought was important to the students. And if they felt moral support from their teachers, they felt authorized, they felt legitimized. So that I think what we thought about what they were doing mattered to them.

COHEN: Did you often have discussions with your students when issues came up which were related to events in the country—

DINNERSTEIN: Sure.

COHEN: —in the war.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes. And sometimes I disagreed with them, and we argued. And sometimes I was proud of them for identifying issues clearly. But I thought that they needed their teachers as general mentors during that period. And you didn't just have to limit it to your job.

COHEN: Well, how did you feel about introducing discussion about the war in Vietnam into your classes which were not directly related to course content, if there was....

DINNERSTEIN: Well, I don't think it happens. I mean if I were a mathematician, it could have been a problem, I suppose. But in my case, it was easy for students to bring up social issues. And, you know, I was talking about social issues in Psychology and Society. Many of the examples that people would bring up would be quite pertinent to what I was talking about. I mean ordinarily your technique is to introduce a general problem and then ask people to generate examples. And the examples that came up were the ones that were on their chests.

COHEN: Okay. I wanted to move on to curriculum, particularly curriculum development and change, which seemed to be sort of a running item of discussion in the seventies. And I guess my first question specifically on curriculum reform or curriculum change, whichever you mean, what were the main influences on curriculum reform or change in your department or in your discipline during this time?

DINNERSTEIN: You'll call me, right? Okay.[to another person]

[Break in recording]

COHEN: We're back on curriculum reform. [Laughs] Yes, my question was what were the main influences, and what were the changes in the curriculum in your discipline, in your department, in psychology, during the sixties, you know, basically the seventies after the move to the new campus. What was going on in curriculum in the teaching of psychology?

DINNERSTEIN: I don't think the curriculum changed very much, except...let's see. Well, I can't remember. When was it that the Institute for Cognitive Studies was organized? That must have been....

COHEN: I can't remember the date.

DINNERSTEIN: Well, I guess you can look it up. But, yes.

COHEN: Yes. Uh-huh.

DINNERSTEIN: But that meant that there was graduate training in psychology. When I came to Rutgers, the only graduate training was in consumer research. Now there was training in memory, perception, thinking, and.... In other words, what developed was a graduate program of an academic kind that was a flanking program to the Institute of Animal Behavior, a theoretically-oriented graduate program.

COHEN: And that was the Institute of Cognitive Studies.

DINNERSTEIN: That's right.

COHEN: Oh, I see.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes.

COHEN: Okay. So that had a big impact. That was under Solomon Asch.

DINNERSTEIN: He was the original director.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes.

DINNERSTEIN: And I was the original organizer of it. And included Asch and Robert and a couple of others. Yes.

COHEN: So that was the main change during that period.

DINNERSTEIN: It meant that we were training students who intended to become psychologists.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes. So there was no...otherwise you're saying that—were there any significant changes in undergraduate instruction during that period?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, there probably were because the department was enlarged. So there were more professors because each professor was only spending part of his or her time with the undergraduates, right? He spent half his time in the graduate program. That meant...and he still taught the same number of undergraduate courses, it meant that the undergraduate students benefited from a larger number of professors in different fields.

COHEN: Yes. I had a question there about the graduate school about how the establishment of the graduate school itself affected the curriculum. Let's see, did the development of the—did the establishment of the graduate school in any way directly affect the curriculum in psychology? Or was that already a going concern?

DINNERSTEIN: You mean did the presence of the graduate program make changes in the undergraduate program? Is that what you're saying?

COHEN: Alright. That's one good question.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes. Well, because you had more different teachers, and each teacher was teaching in both programs, the undergraduate and the graduate programs, then you had more points of view represented in the undergraduate—there were just more people there to give them different perspectives on psychology: Look at different topics, express different points of view.

COHEN: Were there any— Do you recall basic differences among the faculty on a perceived conflict between graduate education and research and undergraduate education? This seems to be a theme that comes up apparently.

DINNERSTEIN: I think the students at the time—when was it? There was a time when there was a student rebellion or at least a grievance brought up about how the undergraduates were being shortchanged. But, no, I can't think.... I think the undergraduates profited immensely from the presence of the graduate program because they had more different teachers, and the teachers were more creative people.

COHEN: Within the context of the time, what did meaningful and relevant mean? [Laughter]

DINNERSTEIN: That's a question that I would hit the kids with. Relevant to what!? And they would say, "Just relevant!" [Laughter]

COHEN: Alright.

DINNERSTEIN: I guess they meant relevant to the society as a whole and to the present historical moment.

COHEN: And what were they asking for when the students were talking about meaningful? What were they asking you specifically as....

DINNERSTEIN: Well, they wanted, you know, some perspective from my discipline, which very often I couldn't provide, on particular, critical events in our history. You know what does a psychologists really have to say about the war in Vietnam? I mean I could talk about the problem of obedience and disobedience, social disobedience and obedience and the boys who went and the boys who refused to go. But that was only an example of something you could observe in many other areas of life. I mean actually the forces that brought about that war in Vietnam were not psychological. You know it was historical and economic and God knows what. Political.

COHEN: Were there other facets of life that you could deal with as a psychologist which would satisfy their need for relevance other than the war in Vietnam?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, the fact that I thought hard about gender. It provided a kind of intellectual base for the women's affirmative action struggle, which was partially successful, not wholly.

COHEN: On the question of gender, how did you feel Rutgers in Newark was doing in terms of developing programs in gender, race, and class, but specifically women's studies during that period in the seventies and, well, early eighties? Was Rutgers swimming with the tide? Or was it lagging? Was it ahead?

DINNERSTEIN: You know there were some very good people who were running that women's studies program. And I had said all I had to say about gender. And I wasn't really interested in talking about it anymore. I was working on something else.

COHEN: What years— Oh, what years roughly are you talking about during this period when you were working on something?

DINNERSTEIN: *Mermaid* came out in 1972 or something. In the first half of the seventies. And I immediately started working on another book, which I'm still working on—God help me! Which was about—which is about—the relation between the human mind and the prospects of continuing life on earth. So that problem is one that has something to do with gender. I mean gender contributes to the prevailing craziness. But it's very far from being the whole story or even in the central part of the story.

COHEN: I guess my question—maybe one more on this—do you feel that women's studies on the Rutgers campus in Newark was developed in a timely fashion?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, it was developed when people were ready to focus on it, you know.

COHEN: Okay...Faculty is my next topic here. Why did the issue of tenure policy emerge so prominently in the seventies, in your opinion? Do you have a feel for that?

DINNERSTEIN: That's a very interesting question. I don't know. Maybe there was a turnover, maybe after— But didn't the college expand at that time?

COHEN: Yes. There was.

DINNERSTEIN: A lot of teachers were suddenly needed. And that meant hiring—expanding departments more rapidly than was the case before.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

DINNERSTEIN: And that meant taking a lot of new people in. And that might mean that several people who were taken in, in a year would be let go. So there would be a lot of unhappy,

rejected candidates for tenure on the campus at the same time. And students who were unhappy that they weren't getting the tenured and all that.

COHEN: Well, on the question of tenure, do you recall the issue about several or at least one—there was some focus of attention on the faculty members in the Botany Department who were not given tenure, particularly one assistant professor who was not given tenure? I was wondering why there was that focus on the Botany Department or was this just plain chance? Do you recall that at all?

DINNERSTEIN: I don't.

COHEN: Okay.

DINNERSTEIN: I was close with Helen Strauser, and she must have been on something about it, but....

COHEN: Okay.

DINNERSTEIN: But Helen is dead, so you can't interview her.

COHEN: Yes. Concerning research facilities in Newark, complaint was often made, at least I've heard, that the inferior research facilities in Newark were unfair to the faculty in Newark who wanted to do research. It was unfair to therefore compare and expect the same output from them as the output of faculty in New Brunswick. How did you feel about the validity of this argument?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, I'm willing to take at their word the statements of the physical sciences, biology, chemistry, zoology, that they needed facilities they didn't have. Actually our department had—psychologists don't need a whole lot of space and equipment for what they do. And so that problem of space didn't hit us as hard. We don't even need all this space for animals and machines.

COHEN: A couple more. The administration always crops up. How would you compare the contributions as university presidents of Mason Gross and Edward Bloustein, looking back?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, I wasn't in a position to evaluate Mason Gross. I was a new person.

[End of Tape #1]

COHEN: We're back with Dr. Dinnerstein. We were on administration. And I—I guess the question was how would you assess the administrations of Mason Gross and Edward Bloustein? And if you could pick it up from there.

DINNERSTEIN: I can't compare them because Mason Gross was president when I was first working at Rutgers. And when did he quit?

COHEN: Well, Bloustein came on board in 1972? I don't remember exactly, but thereabouts.

DINNERSTEIN: Eighteen years ago. Yes. I was too busy at that time with my daughter and my stepchildren to pay much attention to anything except strictly academic.

COHEN: Strictly academic, okay.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes.

COHEN: Maybe will run down this list. Any feel for—how would you assess Malcolm Talbott's contributions as vice—he was vice president and acting dean? Do you recall? He was the acting dean during the whole Conklin Hall takeover, a critical period.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes, that Conklin— He was—I think he was very conflicted and unhappy during that period. And I don't think he was simply down on the students. The students vilified him as...you know they wanted him to be the enemy. But I don't think he really was. He wasn't quite decisive in advising the central administration or...he didn't take sides properly. He shillyshallied. But my impression was he was a—I never got very angry at him.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Okay. Let's see, the deanship of Herbert Woodward?

DINNERSTEIN: Wow! That's way back, isn't it?

COHEN: Yes. Any feel for that?

DINNERSTEIN: All I know is that Danny valued him because he was a farsighted man who supported—really taxed the resources of the college to support Danny's work until he could get large grants which then of course brought money into the college. And that was an act of faith on Woodward's part, which showed some acumen.

COHEN: How would you assess the deanship of William Gilliland?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, he was an actor, wasn't he? [Laughter] He was sort of charming. I didn't get any sense of where he really stood. He projected a persona of charm and affability. And I really never.... I think he wanted to make nice.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Okay. Henry Blumenthal?

DINNERSTEIN: I loved him, Blumenthal. I was very fond of him. Why?

COHEN: Could you expand on that?

DINNERSTEIN: [Laughter] Well, I thought he was a thoughtful, responsible man. He was kind, he took students seriously. He was very respectful to students. I never heard any student say that he or she had been treated arrogantly or carelessly by Blumenthal. A person was somebody important to him.

COHEN: How did you feel about him as an administrator of the college?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, as an administrator of the college, that would mean what? Was he good at getting money from New Brunswick?...I mean, I never heard anybody complain about him. I mean the faculty didn't seem to complain about him as far as I knew. He was a gentle and just man. That was my impression of him.

COHEN: And what was your impression of other faculty members' impression of Henry Blumenthal? What was he—was there any consensus, attitude?

DINNERSTEIN: I don't remember anybody complaining about him.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Richard Robey?

DINNERSTEIN: I remember that I didn't like him, but I can't remember why.

COHEN: There was controversy. And then Norman Samuels as dean.

DINNERSTEIN: As dean, yes.

COHEN: I guess as provost, too.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes. Well, I think, you know, he's a sort political person as compared with Blumenthal, for example, who seemed to me always thinking about big principles. I thought that Samuels was more connected with media contingencies and more opportunistic, but not in an ugly way.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Sure.

DINNERSTEIN: And I'm not a person who's been thinking very hard about the fate of the whole university. So I can't say what his...what it means that—what happened to the university as a whole during his reign and what he had to do with it. I was just responding to the quality of the people as people.

COHEN: Sure. Uh-huh. Any feeling for the administration of James Young as provost?

DINNERSTEIN: I don't remember him very well.

COHEN: Do you have any feeling—just a few more—do you have any feeling at all for the discussion about the possibility, or the advisability, of Rutgers-Newark spinning off from New Brunswick and becoming a separate entity? [Were you] ever involved in any discussions, have any thoughts about that—then or now?

DINNERSTEIN: I haven't ever had to be responsible for helping to form a policy about that. And I'm not sure I understand all the considerations. But I know that some of my colleagues seemed worried that if we were spun off, we would lose status...that we wouldn't be a part of the

state's central responsibility for education of its students. And, you know, there might be some disadvantage to Rutgers-Newark from that change in status, considering that we have students coming to us locally from high schools that can't manage to have very high academic standards.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes. Okay. My last category is.... Dana Library, what were your experiences in terms of collections in the Dana Library. How did you feel about what we had—have?

DINNERSTEIN: I have to tell you I've never been a person who could use libraries. Never. [Laughter] There are too many books. I get stupefied by the presence of so much knowledge, [laughter] that I can't breach, you know.

COHEN: I know how you feel, yes.

DINNERSTEIN: I guess you do.

COHEN: Yes, there's an awful lot...

DINNERSTEIN: And so really I have used libraries amazingly little in my life.

COHEN: You're lucky.

DINNERSTEIN: You know I tend to buy certain books if I think I'm going to use them again and again. And I get pieces of books from libraries reprinted.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

DINNERSTEIN: And that's what I do. [Laughter]

COHEN: Okay. How was your experience with the services in the Dana Library—reference services, circulation, interlibrary loan, that sort of thing?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, that's what I mean, I hardly used it. I mean the people there were always very pleasant and accommodating. And I felt they could, you know, if I needed their services, they would be very nice. But I couldn't avail myself because the presence of so many books freaks me out. [Laughter]

COHEN: Okay. Fair enough. Could you have any feeling about either the strengths or the weaknesses of the library?

DINNERSTEIN: You know nobody has talked to me about that.

COHEN: Yes.

DINNERSTEIN: And as I say, I have no basis for judging myself.

COHEN: Okay. I just want to wrap it up with any topics we haven't touched on you'd like to talk about.

DINNERSTEIN: This is all going to go into an archive, and who's going to read it?

COHEN: Well, the purpose of oral history is to contribute...the basic purpose is to contribute to the archive. As I mentioned to you before, I hope that this will be transcribed. Hopefully some future historian will be going into the archive and will be able to use these tapes and the transcriptions.

DINNERSTEIN: Mm-hmm.

COHEN: That's what my proposal is about, is after I'm through with this to submit it to the university archives and become part of the university. So if you have any...if you have any remarks for posterity?

DINNERSTEIN: I don't have any profound remarks. But what I think is that if you pulled out of the different interviews that you're conducting some quotes that seem salient to you, and publish them just as a message from you to the faculty, people would be very interested. I'd love to hear what other people say about these things. I'd like to get a sense of what my colleagues' feelings about the university would be like, especially the feelings of the people in Newark.

COHEN: Yes, yes. Well, that's something that would be down the pike, so to speak. It's not something that was in my original proposal.

DINNERSTEIN: It wasn't.

COHEN: No. The original proposal was to do an oral history, to do the tapes, do the transcriptions. But if by the time I get through with that phase of it and I can see my way clear, I would like to do that.

DINNERSTEIN: I mean you would be the one to do it because you did the interviews, and you know the people. You know you can think of anything, you remember the person's expression and, you know, the feeling.

COHEN: That's one way to go. But sometimes just having something in the archives, in the hope that some future historian who is writing a history, and I think we need a history of Rutgers in Newark, could you use these interviews.

DINNERSTEIN: You have a lot of faith there's going to be a future.

COHEN: Some kind of future.

DINNERSTEIN: [Laughs] With human beings in it, living creatures crawling around the earth?

COHEN: I just have to say that I hope that there will be. And I guess my final questions is, anything that we talked about do you want to return to that maybe you want to elaborate on or footnote?

DINNERSTEIN: Can't think of anything. I do think that you should give this back in printed form, you know, to the people who would be interested in it.

COHEN: Yes.

DINNERSTEIN: People in our college.

COHEN: Yes, as I mentioned before, it would be a question of getting the tapes transcribed. That can be pretty expensive, multiplying, you know, one hour times—one hour, two hours—one hour of tape could take, if it's ten hours of transcription time, if I'm going to interview, my original proposal was to interview up to seventy-five people, okay....

DINNERSTEIN: If you could spend like an hour with each interview alone, I mean by yourself, with each transcript once it's transcribed....

COHEN: Yes, that's what I have to do.

DINNERSTEIN: Much easier to read it than to listen to it.

COHEN: Oh, yes, that's the reason why I want to transcribe it.

DINNERSTEIN: And just pick out what seem to you salient comments that people have made and put them together into a little pastiche.

COHEN: That would be.... Yes, if I can get the whole thing through, get all the tapes done, get everything transcribed, and then that would be the third stage.

DINNERSTEIN: Just to make a little bouquet of....

COHEN: Yes, yes. Well....

DINNERSTEIN: I mean the people that you interviewed would probably enjoy that very much, to hear what the others were saying without going through the whole damned archive.

COHEN: Yes. [Laughter] Okay. I thank you very much, Dr. Dinnerstein. We'll stop at this point.

[End of Tape #2.]

COHEN: This is Wednesday, October 16, 1991. This is Gil Cohen. I'm meeting with Professor Dorothy Dinnerstein in her home in Leonia, New Jersey. Okay. We are back with Professor

Dinnerstein. And I was asking you before if you could just give us a brief sketch of your academic career prior to and after coming to Rutgers University.

DINNERSTEIN: You know I probably have some of that material in my files, but I couldn't give you dates.

COHEN: No, that's not essential.

DINNERSTEIN: My academic career. I could fish out a vita for you.

COHEN: Okay.

DINNERSTEIN: I started out at Brooklyn College, and I did some part-time teaching there... I started out thinking I'd like to be an interview researcher, walking up to people in the street, asking them how they felt about the end of the Second World War, the turn of events... we were so happy the war was over, but it ended in a catastrophe which was the use of the atom bomb for the first time. And I wanted to talk about things like that... I think it took a few years before I understood that if I wasn't going to be... an outcast in the academic realm, I had to decide whether I was an experimentalist or a descriptive social psychologist. And so for the first years at Brooklyn College..while I was doing my graduate work part time at the New School, to which I went because Wertheimer was there.

COHEN: Who?

DINNERSTEIN: Max Wertheimer.

COHEN: Wertheimer.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes. The Gestalt psychologist. And I met Wertheimer through Solomon Asch, who was my teacher at Brooklyn College. And later Danny and I brought him to Rutgers. So he was the first chair of the Institute for Cognitive Studies at Rutgers. Now I lost my thread. Danny had an Institute of Animal Behavior that was beginning to flourish. I had had—I think maybe I said this already—a series of short jobs in the summer or for part of an academic year. Also I was working fitfully at my graduate work at The New School. I hadn't decided whether I was going to be an academic or a sort of sociologically-oriented researcher of people's feelings about the war, the end of the war, the terrible way it ended with the invention of this destructive—use of this destructive weapon. Or whether I was going to do experiments. Experiments were more fun. [Laughter] Little experiments in memory and perception. And really for the most time I've been a psychologist, I've vacillated back and forth between those two ways of being a psychologist. It took me a long time to get my degree.

COHEN: At The New School?

DINNERSTEIN: At The New School. Wertheimer was a very powerful influence. He was Asch's teacher. And a very—an extraordinary man. But he died quite soon after I started working at The New School. I worked with Kohler, who—Wolfgang Kohler.

COHEN: Wolfgang Kohler.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes. Who took over, tried to take over, the kind of psychology that Asch was—that Wertheimer was teaching; they were colleagues. But he was a very different kind of man. He, for example, went to Swarthmore to teach when they left Germany. Wertheimer left because he was Jewish. He would have been killed. And Kohler left because he didn't like what was happening in Germany; ...he was offered prestigious positions in Nazi Germany, but he didn't take them. So it was a strange kind of apprenticeship. During the war, I—it took me a long time to get my degree, eventually with Asch. Asch was a descriptive—well, what I liked about Asch's work was his descriptive account of the development of social attitudes and the meaning of being a social animal in the human world.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

DINNERSTEIN: Kohler did elegant—yes, elegant—little experiments in perception and memory. He really did not study the social field. Those three people, Asch, Kohler, and Wertheimer, were probably my main teachers.

COHEN: And then you came to Rutgers after your graduate work, right?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, my graduate work extended over a very long period. I think—I had done some market research. I had taught at Brooklyn College. I had hung around The New School because Wertheimer was there. I think that my first job was at Rutgers.

COHEN: Oh, you were hired into the Psychology Department at that time, or the Social Sciences Division, is that correct, that you recall?

DINNERSTEIN: Danny had a kind of barn over on Rector Street where he was starting to work with doves. And he...there was hardly any Psychology Department at that time. George Smith and Bill Wells, who were basically market research people, were the department. The, for some reason Danny joined them—I forget the circumstances—and started to get large grants for his studies of...ringed doves. He had worked with Schneeler [sp]. I don't know whether this is of interest to you.

COHEN: Well, I mean whatever background, yes.

DINNERSTEIN: Schneeler was also a kind of researcher who did—who was fascinated with the life of the animal he was exploring. So there was a market research-dominated Psychology Department at Rutgers until Danny came with his doves [laughter] and started a theoretical program.

COHEN: So that was the beginning of it.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes.

COHEN: You would say.

DINNERSTEIN: I would say that theoretically-oriented psychology at Rutgers started then. And I started as a part-time person and gradually created a laboratory in which students could do experiments because George Smith and Bill Wells were not mainly interested in theoretical psychology. And Danny thought—and I think he was right—that his work with the doves was compatible with the kind of Gestalt approach that Asch and Kohler represented. And in some way I think that's true. It was a way of looking at an animal in its entire environment instead of picking out little pieces of what it did to separate out, for example, behaviors that were learned and behaviors that might be inherited dispositions to behave that had evolved with the species. Well, so I started an experimental laboratory. As I remember, it was a loft—

COHEN: Oh, yes?

DINNERSTEIN: —a loft building on Rector Street?

COHEN: Yes, might have been. You mean your laboratory.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes. Anyway, it took—you could find the records actually. I was there for about—most of my academic career.

COHEN: Oh! Yes. Okay. Let me just....

[Break in recording]

Okay. We're back with Professor Dinnerstein. Okay. We were talking about your academic career. I wanted to get into the area of affirmative action for women faculty on the Newark campus. My first question is, how many women were on the faculty around about 1970 or thereabouts, if you can recall at the time of the new campus?

DINNERSTEIN: You know I don't remember. But I know that there were very few women, and that they occupied the underling positions. They would be brought in, as I was, as part-time people. A lot of them were taking care of their children... You know their husbands had time for full-time work, but the women... maneuvered with help, as I did, to take over most of the care of children and home. And meanwhile squeeze in any kind of part-time study that they could manage. So it was a struggle for me thinking about who was taking care of my child, what kind of a day she was having, which was much more my responsibility than her father's. And at the same time, gradually feeling that I would be a sort of second-class, interchangeable, temporary piece of goods on the market, that women were being used to fill in part-time positions because they were carrying most of the responsibility for their families at the same time. And they were not expected to get tenure, and they were—they filled in the elementary courses. So it was about that time that I started to feel that this was not the way to go about putting the mind to work in a discipline.

COHEN: How did the movement, the women's movement, on campus get organized?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, that was quite a lot later. Helen Strauser was in something of the same position. Your focus is really about the position of—you're asking me about the development of the position of women on the campus?

COHEN: Well, yes. And as background, I wanted to get into the area of the Women's Caucus and then how that led up to the filing of the class action for equalizing the salaries of women. So how did the movement get going? How was it organized? How was the Women's Caucus organized? What led up to that, do you recall?

DINNERSTEIN: I don't remember the exact incidents. But what happened was that there were very few women on the campus. I was.... I think that Helen and I were the only two in the— Was that the early sixties that that happened?

COHEN: Well the class action, if I remember, was in the early seventies.

DINNERSTEIN: Early seventies. But I think what led us to—Helen and me—to start a women's caucus was that it came to our attention that women, because they were expected to be part-timers because they were the ones who had the main responsibility for bringing up their children—and even if they didn't have children, they were the ones who ran the house, at home. Or else they were unmarried women. And those were the kind of people I was educated by in school, who gave up or lost the possibility of parenthood because they wanted to do work in the world. And it was taken for granted that women would be either housewives or spinsters who could then struggle. Even spinsters were somewhat derogated. Spinster schoolteachers. But as far as I remember, most of the teachers—most of the women teachers at Rutgers were struggling to keep full-time jobs without tenure, while taking full responsibility for their families. Or else being spinsters who didn't have the comfort of family life. And even when they did produce publishable work, it was becoming clear that the same grant application or the same paper presented to a journal for publication would be less likely to be accepted if it had a woman's name on it. So even those women whose lives permitted them to work hard at psychology, when they got to the point of trying to publish their work—and publishing your work was a criterion for tenure and promotion—encountered prejudice at the desks of the academic journals.

What I can't remember was exactly—I guess it was the beginning of the women's movement which came out of the New Left. I wrote about some of that in *Mermaid and the Minotaur* in the last chapters. The New Left was a beautiful period, a sort of flowering. The men were trying to incorporate into their style of living, or anyway their style of walking around wearing their hair and dressing, some female characteristics. But the women would be derogated as dykes if they took on any male characteristics. I'm trying to remember whether the struggle of the black students or the struggle of the women came first. Do you happen to remember?

COHEN: I couldn't attempt to date it. I mean with the black students, of course the big event was 1969 with the takeover of Conklin Hall. But as far as dating is concerned, I believe that the class action that you and Helen Strauser were instrumental in filing was seventy, seventy-one I believe, shortly after that. Do you recall what led up to the decision to file the class action on discrimination against the women faculty?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, I wish I could remember. It might come back to me. I know that it was a question of tenure.

COHEN: Oh, was it.

DINNERSTEIN: I think so.

COHEN: Okay.

DINNERSTEIN: I think that Helen and I at that time were the two women on the campus who had tenure. And something, which may come back to me, made us look at, first of all, the number of women we had on campus, the number of women, well, teachers; they weren't all professors. And I can't remember which came first, the blacks or the women. I think it was the women. We were—I'm sorry, I can't remember the incidents that precipitated this.

COHEN: Do you remember what documentation was used for supporting the claim of discrimination against women?

DINNERSTEIN: I think it was Blumenthal who gave Helen and me the data that we asked him for.

COHEN: Yes. What data was that you needed?

DINNERSTEIN: We needed to know who constituted, who were the people in each department, how many were men and how many were women, at what rate they published, what the criteria were for tenure. At that time people were trying to do studies in which they would send the same set of data, experimental data in an article, to two different journals with a male name on it and a female on it—a male name on one and a female name on the other.

COHEN: This group that you were involved in?

DINNERSTEIN: No. But it was something....

COHEN: But it was something in your field, right?

DINNERSTEIN: Something that was being done.

COHEN: I see.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes. And discovering that the paper was more likely to be accepted if it was authored by a man. So even if you were managing to get papers published in first-rate journals, the, and if you could find a man and a woman who had managed to publish the same number of papers in first-rate journals, it was still expected that women would not—women who had achieved that would not be bossy at all about the affairs of the department. They would be put, for example, on committees that, department committees, that were powerless: taking care of the refreshments for the colloquiums.

[Break in recording]

COHEN: We're back with Professor Dinnerstein. So we're getting into the documentation that was used.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes.

COHEN: I wanted to ask you: When you presented this, what was Henry Blumenthal's response when you presented your—when the group presented the case to him, what they wanted to do?

DINNERSTEIN: He was friendly. He was friendly. Without Henry Blumenthal, I think we might not have been able to prevail at all. And I still think that our victory was only a partial one. But it was very important.

COHEN: Why do you say it was only partial?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, it's still true that women at Rutgers as in other places are more likely to be hired as part-time people. And you know it falls into the—it falls in with the general social consensus, which I hope is, you know, being reversed or reworked, that women, that there's a kind of class of women who are drones; they're not mothers, they're not expected to be particularly attractive or else there expected to be very attractive and to get by on their attractiveness with powerful men. So it's really difficult, more then than now, but I think it's still true to a degree now, for a woman to work in a conflict this way without feeling that the work that she loves, that she wants to do, and not feel derogated as a pushy woman or an unfeminine woman, not being accused of neglecting her children if she and her husband are both pursuing careers. Husband is never accused of neglecting his children. [Laughs] You know I think there's still a significant amount of injustice in the life of a woman who wants children and luxuriant domestic enjoyment and sexual satisfaction and all. Whereas those are considered the minimal, you know, the least that a man could expect out of life.

COHEN: When the class action was being filed, what was the nature of the documentation that the—was it still the Women's Caucus at the time that was functioning in filing the class action?

DINNERSTEIN: I think so. Although it might have been only a few of us had tenure and could—

COHEN: Have taken the lead?

DINNERSTEIN: Yes.

COHEN: But what was the nature of the documentation, if you can recall?

DINNERSTEIN: Henry Blumenthal, bless his heart, gave us the data that we needed.

COHEN: And what was that data?

DINNERSTEIN: The data of the number.... for every woman on the campus when she came—I hope I remember right—when she came, how long it took her to get tenure. Actually I think Helen and I were the only two who had gotten tenure. What she was paid in comparison with comparable men.

COHEN: To what agency was the data and the case presented?

DINNERSTEIN: There was affirmative action machinery at that time.

COHEN: Yes.

DINNERSTEIN: For blacks. And it was just beginning to....

COHEN: Was that the Department of Higher Education that the women's claim was presented?

DINNERSTEIN: No. It wasn't...I don't think the academic establishment at all was. It was something comparable. I forget whether it was government—I mean state or....

COHEN: Okay. Did the group then, did the group have to produce the document?

DINNERSTEIN: We produced a document, and we got that from Henry Blumenthal.

COHEN: Yes. The data.

DINNERSTEIN: The data.

COHEN: But you still had to produce your own case.

DINNERSTEIN: Well, what we did was we...the number of men in the department, the number of women, and the salaries they were paid, the load they had.

COHEN: Did you or any of the other faculty members, these is the women organized, have to make a public statement, have to appear before a body at any time? Or was it just through the paperwork?

DINNERSTEIN: I just don't remember. But I think that we met to talk about it in sort of open meetings in an auditorium with Malcolm Talbott?

COHEN: Oh, yes?

DINNERSTEIN: I think so. I think.... I know it was Blumenthal who was friendly to us.

COHEN: Yes.

DINNERSTEIN: And Danny's, I must say, Danny's friendliness, because he was a powerful man who had gotten big grants, meant something for our.... So we didn't.... First of all we

didn't win that battle completely by any means. And secondly, what we won, we won with the help of an extraordinarily competent and valuable man for the college.

COHEN: Oh, so—

DINNERSTEIN: Who was bringing in grant money.

COHEN: So Danny actually became involved.

DINNERSTEIN: He didn't become involved in the...he didn't organize it, you know. In fact he was quite upset when we started to do that. But he became interested as we accumulated the data, and it was very clear that these inequities could be documented.

COHEN: Was it just his help to the group, or did he in any way deal with any of the people, did he have any other input in presenting the argument?

DINNERSTEIN: I don't think he had any input in presenting the argument. But we were—I really wish I could remember whether it was the women or the black students who started it.

COHEN: When you say started, what—

DINNERSTEIN: Started the.... which movement came first.

COHEN: Well, my recollection is they were sort of simultaneous, late sixties into the seventies, as far as the actual dates of the filing, the actual actions, the Conklin Hall takeover was in February of sixty-nine. And I'm pretty sure that this class action was around seventy, seventy-one. But of course I'm not sure.

DINNERSTEIN: I'm not sure.

COHEN: So it was really—things were pretty much parallel movements, as far as I could see, you know, in terms of developing, see. I wanted to ask, what were the outcomes of the class action?

DINNERSTEIN: I think it became easier for women to be appointed, to be recruited in non-tenured positions and promoted when they produced publishable papers. The problem was wider. It was harder for women to publish their papers. And even if you—and if you sent in the same.... People were starting at that time to send in the same paper to comparable journals, one with a man's name on it, and one with a woman's name on it. Things like that. I don't think that could possibly be the whole thing. And finding discrimination.

COHEN: But after the...claim was filed.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes.

COHEN: What was the response of the agency that received this complaint, claim, with the documentation?

DINNERSTEIN: It wasn't wholeheartedly cordial. [Laughs] But it was very clear that there was this discrimination, and there was a man who came to investigate who was black. And he worked both with cases of inequities of sex and of color. I can't remember who he was. And I think we ended with a compromise. And it certainly didn't—the situation of women didn't change overnight. More women were, I think over the years, more women were hired as lowly part-time instructors, and it remained ambiguous when they did not get tenure, whether—I guess the thing that became clear to me was that women who were married or trying to get married or pregnant or mothers had such heavy responsibilities at home, which men did not share, that in fact it was easier for men to turn out the kinds of research that gets you tenure. So that the problem of inequity in academic life was inextricable from the general question of women's responsibility for children.

COHEN: When they got the response to the claim, what adjustments were made in salaries, if any?

DINNERSTEIN: Compromise adjustments.

COHEN: Compromise adjustments....

DINNERSTEIN: Yes.

COHEN: What did the group ask for that it didn't get?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, what it asked the university for was comparable promotion and salary decisions for men and women. And I think that that—you know I just don't remember the data. But I think that that went a long way. But the wider problem of why women had trouble meeting the criteria for tenure, why they in fact were not as productive in the journals or as active on powerful committees, the kinds of things that make you a valuable member of the faculty no matter how well you teach, those conditions were determined by pressures for which the university wasn't responsible. For instance, the care of children. Or if you didn't have children to take care of, the pressure on you, you know, you'd better not get married then. And if you weren't married, you were an old maid. Or you were a bachelor girl trying to get sex wherever she could. So the general situation of women in the workplace has a lot to do with their responsibility for children. I mean, that was what led me to this proposal that it was important for men to—that we really couldn't have any equity between the sexes unless men were as responsible for children as women were.

COHEN: Which is the idea in *Mermaid*, yes.

DINNERSTEIN: That's right.

COHEN: I just—I wanted to get to that in a minute. I want to ask you, what was the—how would you say?—if you can recall the long-term effect on hiring of women on the campus as a result of following the class action victory, shall we say?

DINNERSTEIN: Well, I think it was a qualified victory, you know. That we do have some powerful women—more powerful women—I think throughout academia than we had before. But it's still the case that those women have less time with their families.

COHEN: At this time, at the same time this was going on on the campus, you were writing *Mermaid and the Minotaur*, right? *Mermaid and the Minotaur*, 1970. Could you go into the—just mention briefly some of the ideas that went into that concerning childcare? Could you go into some of the substance of that, the content of *Mermaid*?

DINNERSTEIN: Oh, simply that women... under the present conditions—I'm not talking about people who are hunter/gatherers, but in high-technology societies—women are in subordinate relations to men, and in particular they're responsible for the care of children to a much greater degree than.... For example, in hunter/gatherer societies, men take over the responsibility for boys, teach them how to hunt, quite early so that the mother really entrusts most of the education of her son to his father. I think that what I was talking about in *Mermaid* was a phenomenon of advanced technology in rich countries. But I don't know what aspect of this you're interested in actually. Because there's a very large, in all societies, there's a difference between the sexes in esteem and clout. And I think what we were trying to adjust in Rutgers-Newark or in that whole period of the women's movement was a way of using the achievements of high technology to help liberate the creative talents of women.

COHEN: I just want to ask how did your work as a professor in the university, and specifically your work in the Women's Caucus, influence your work on *Mermaid*? And how did your work writing *Mermaid* influence your work on the campus and in the caucus? If you can characterize that.

DINNERSTEIN: I think they were interrelated. Yes, they—it was a period, and I must say it was a period of self-examination, not only in the universities and not only of the position of women. It was a period of criticism of advanced technological society. That period after the late fifties and into the sixties and seventies.

COHEN: And this is the theme that you're picking up in your current work on the ecosphere.

DINNERSTEIN: Yes.

COHEN: The whole impact of technological society.

DINNERSTEIN: Well, actually the assault of human beings on the planet: That is that people are exploiting and dominating the resources of the planet in the same way that advanced industrial societies exploit the resources of women.

COHEN: So you were really going beyond sexism. You were dealing with sexism as related to, as you pointed out, the industrial society. I've got to finish the book. I think that's pretty much the questions that I wanted to ask, unless there's something else that you might want to get back to or address, something that was on your mind.

DINNERSTEIN: Well, I'm much more pessimistic now than I was when I wrote *Mermaid* because the actual state of the earth, Mother Earth—that's how people think of it—is, you know, imperiled every moment.

COHEN: And you relate the dominance inherent in sexism to the dominance inherent in man's of, say, raping of the earth. Is that fair?

DINNERSTEIN: Yes. I would say that in any society, there are going to be some people who are more nurturant and more concerned with the earth and with other people than others. And also there are societies in which this rapacious and aggressive, you know, sort of tearing off of the flesh of the earth and eating it are much worse than other societies. There are varieties. But certainly I think the ability to return the nurturance that you got when you were a child and give it again, you know, keep it going, is a mark of human health. And it applies both to—it certainly applies in the realm of the sexes, and it applies in economic life and it applies in our relation to the living earth because we're all one thing.

COHEN: Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

[End of Tape #3]

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