

Maureen and Mike

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**Oral History Number: 378-018**

**Interviewee: Jennifer Euell**

**Interviewer: Dawn Walsh**

**Date of Interview: May 4, 2001**

**Project: Montana Feminist History Oral History Collection**

Dawn Walsh: This is Dawn Walsh, and I'm about to interview Jennifer Euell for the Montana Feminist History Project. We are in the SARS office, the Sexual Assault Recovery Service office here at the University of Montana in the Curry Health Center. The date is May 4, year 2001.

Well, hello, Jennifer.

Jennifer Euell: Hello, Dawn.

DW: Thanks for interviewing today.

JE: Sure.

DW: So, I like to start out with asking some background information about you. Where you were born, where you went to school, what you studied, just that kind of stuff?

JE: Well, I was born and raised in Montana. I grew up on a small ranch east of Billings in the area sort of near Custer, Custer Battlefield, that area. My mother's a teacher. My father was pretty much a rancher. He took different jobs at different times, because he couldn't make enough money really ranching to survive. So, he did trapping and I don't know, he's done lots of different things. I spent my elementary years there. I went to church school, and so all my family from (unintelligible) so I sort of went part time to church school, part time public school, which was interesting. Then when I got to high school, I went to the boarding school in Bozeman, which is the Seventh Day Adventist Boarding School called Mount Ellis Academy. That sort of set me apart from pretty much everybody else I knew, which was kind of crazy, but it was great because I ended meeting a lot of people from different parts of the United States as well as other countries who were going to school there. That was kind of broadening for me, you know growing up in small town Montana. Then I went, just my first year in college there in Bozeman at MSU, and I was studying—I think at that point I was studying Communications, but what I really wanted to do was Journalism, and that's why I came to the University of Montana. In 1991, I moved to Missoula. I got my degree in Journalism in '95, and ended up hating it. So, I spent a few years—I mean I wrote a little bit for the Independent and the Missoulian, and I worked for some of the TV stations. I worked for one in Bozeman, and here as well at KPAX for a while, but I just didn't feel like it was really what I wanted to be doing. I think I had some sort of idea that Journalism included telling the truth, and somehow changing people's minds about things, and that didn't really pan out. So, I went back to school eventually in Social Work. I just finished that degree last year, so I have two bachelor's at this point, maybe a master's some day.

DW: That's just the situation I'm in. Ok, so then while you were a social work student here at the University of Montana, is that when you became interested in issues relating to women?

JE: You know, it happened before that. I think, I mean I had always been interested in women's issues to some extent, and that has to do with my whole sort of idea of justice, and I just always felt like that was an area where a lot of injustice occurred. So, I had always been a little bit interested in that kind of thing. I'm not sure exactly the moment when it happened that I decided that was the work I wanted to do, but I knew that I was interested in doing at least volunteer work in that area. So, I started volunteering at the Y in, let me think, it must have been '96. So, yeah, I think it's been about five years since I've started doing that. I started working there just a few months after that. I'd been volunteer, and four months after that I started working there as the Night Coordinator, and then I went back to school a year later. So, that was kind of how that worked. Once I started working there, I really felt like that's what I should be doing with my life. I don't know, something about—I just, it felt really, I think there's something about the connection with the clients that really got me. Just that feeling that here was place where you could really make a difference.

DW: And then how did you first hook up with SARS?

JE: When I came back to school, I'd already been working at the YWCA, and this was sort of a parallel program here at the University, so I just started volunteering, and I starting working here the next year.

DW: Ok. What position do you hold now at SARS?

JE: I'm the Coordinator now.

DW: And how long have you been in position?

JE: Just this year, since last August.

DW: So, now since this is the again Montana Feminist History Project, I want to ask you about feminism, and your personal philosophy of feminism, how you define that for yourself, how you came—maybe you could elaborate a little bit more about how you came to women's issues through feminism, and how that then affects really who you are now, and how you do you job?

JE: That's a lot. Let's see. I mean I think I definitely just prescribe to the idea that women and men are equal, and that's not something that our society has necessarily ever been able to really put into practice. I think sometimes we give lip service, but in my experience I haven't found that to be true. I think what really brought me to it was the fact that growing up—I grew up in a household that had pretty strict gender roles, but at the same time when you live on a ranch, everybody does the work. So, it was really conflictual for me that I was doing exactly the

same work as my brother, and yet somehow he had all of these privileges that I didn't. I think that's kind of how it started was just sort of the unfairness of it all. Just, I think with the curfews and like who gets—you know who gets the cot, just things that really made me realize that there was some sort of a lie underneath all of that. Where my parents would say well you can do whatever you want, but in reality when I asked to do things they said no. So, you know, like women can do anything expect for that, and that, and that. So, I think that's kind of how it started.

From there, I'd never been one to be able to remain silent very well, so I just in a lot of situations I ended up having to be the one I think that spoke for what I saw as unfair and unjust, and a lot of that is because I'm a woman in small town Montana ended up being about feminist issues and that women should be able to do the same things as men. We should have equal treatment, and we should... we should make the same amount of money. I don't know, just so many things. So, I think that's how it grew, just from a really, just from my experience growing up and living here. Now what else did you want me to address? I'm sorry.

DW: That's ok, I asked you I think too many questions at once.

JE: Uh huh, I got lost.

DW: So what I'm hearing is that a definition of feminism for you is just very basic, men and women are equal and should be treated as such. So, then I know you work mostly with women at SARS, but the other question was then how do you bring your understanding of feminism with you to work?

JE: Well, I guess, that's another part of my history is, well, is that my family was violent, and so that was another area in which that was really demonstrated I think, the inequality in the subordination even. So, I understood very well from a young age how the violent dynamics of a relationship can ruin a woman, or can really change her life, or affect her life, or affect what she can do with her life. So, I think that's really what brought me to the work. I always knew that at some point I would need to address that in my life, whether it was volunteering my time or working in it, or somehow, and I've done it in a lot of different ways. I worked for the Y, actually in a battered women's shelter, and I've worked in advocacy, but I've also worked with WORD a little bit doing some political writing. I run a girl's leadership program called G.U.T.S for the Women's Voices for the Earth organization. So, I think it's really kind of a strong theme through out my life, but I feel like there are so many different ways that our society subordinates women and changes, you know. I guess I just feel like it's a resource that we are sort of throwing away, because I see so many girls growing up, and feeling like they aren't capable, and it's not their place. I just feel like we can't afford to be doing that. We need that energy; we can't just throw it away. So, I mean I guess that's what brought me here was that experience. Working with women at the Y, I did feel like, I mean you can see the change very quickly once they're in an environment in which they're supported, and they're believed in, especially by other women, and they can see other women doing work, and thinking for themselves, and

telling the truth. I think what often happens in a violent relationship, or any kind of abusive whether it's emotional or physical is that their reality is reconstructed by that relationship and limited. Once they can get out of that place into an environment in which they're safe and they have a different perspective on things, a lot can change very quickly, and I found that work to be very rewarding. See, I don't know if I really addressed your question.

DW: But that was great. That was fine.

JE: Sorry. I sort of went off.

DW: Well thanks for sharing that. So, now I'd like to move on to SARS more specifically. So, what can you tell me about the beginning of SARS, the origins of SARS, the basics such as who, what, where, when?

JE: Ok. Well, there's a couple things. I think first of all within the community, it started to be more organization specifically for women, and more services that provided resources and advocacy for women specifically if they're in a violent relationship or if they've experienced some kind of sexual assault. So, I think that was a part of how it got started that it was already in the community, and the University didn't have anything like that. Also, there were a series of rapes, I think in '91, and I think the guy's name was Bubba Jones [?]. I don't really know that much about that, but I do know that that was part of the reason that they started a task force to study the problem on campus to try and figure out how much it really was occurring, and what sort of services were needed, and that kind of thing. So, they started a rape task force, and after they looked at it a little bit they realized they needed more information, and they conducted a University-wide survey. All the women at the University received a survey in the mail, and the questions were almost entirely about victimization, like, "Have you ever been raped? If so, when? What sort of rape was it? Was it violent? Was it an acquaintance or a stranger," and just to really get an idea of what they were looking at as far as the size of the need, I guess. They found that there—it was pretty significant—that, I mean pretty close to national averages, but ever a little higher in some areas, and considering the fact that most people think of Montana as being a very safe and rural kind of environment, it was really surprising I think to a lot of people. They found that, if I can remember exactly, it was like ten percent of respondents had experienced either a rape or an attempt of an assault or sexual assault within the last year, which was pretty huge. Then, I think it was like around forty percent had experienced an assault or an attempted assault at some point in their life.

So, they felt like they need something to address that, which was good that they felt that that was important enough to do that. So, the year after, which was '92, the '92-'93 school year, they started SARS, and it was based very much on the Women's Place Model. In fact Women's Place actually contracted out some services here to do part of the training, and provide some support and that kind of thing, because especially the first year they didn't have advocates until they trained them in. So, for the first six months or whatever it was just the Coordinator, who was Victoria Schaller I believe, is how you say her name, and then some women from the

Women's Place who would help her out a little bit, help her cover the crisis line and that kind of thing. But, yeah, it was the same kind of thing with a twenty-four hour crisis line, kind of a drop in resource center, and then the library. Originally it was a safe space that was reserved just for women, I believe in the first few years. I'm not sure exactly when that changed, probably in '94—'95. They found that they had a lot of clients. I think the first year they had one hundred and some clients, which is pretty huge for a new program on a university campus. So, that's kind of how it started. It was very much based on it's a feminist, it's non-hierarchical model where all the women sort of support each other, and have equal power in the decision-making process, and that it was a safe space that was reserved only for women.

DW: Which very much a feminist idea.

JE: Yeah, and I'm trying to think if there is anything else that really stands out. But that was the main thing, and the idea of peer counseling where just one woman talking to another woman can provide support and the catalyst for change. That was the idea.

DW: I want to just go back to the task force, do you know who initiated the task force? So, when you say they, who were those people?

JE: I'm not sure which person exactly. Ken Low said a name yesterday, and I don't think—Professor Ross, maybe. Do you know who that was?

DW: Professor Ross, uh-uh.

JE: It seems like it was Ross was one of the main ones, but Nancy Fitch was definitely right in there too. She's the one person on campus who is sort of in charge of safety, as far as if there needs to be a warning put out. So, she was really concerned about this series of rapes here, and that kind of thing, so she was really involved. I think that even at the beginning Jeff Furwalts[?] was involved or shortly thereafter, in Psychology. So, those were some the main folks.

DW: Yeah, and then Bari Burke too, I think, from Law. So it seems like then it was a real grassroots effort by faculty and staff, women on campus.

JE: Yeah, I think that it was pretty much faculty women who thought that this was something that needed to be looked at. I mean, but I think it was such a big story when all of those rapes happened so that everybody pretty much recognized that something has to happen here. I think the President also was interested in having somebody look at, and figure out what was, and I think it was pretty well accepted that something had to happen. When they did come out with their recommendation, there was a lot of—I mean you read some of the article—there was a lot of controversy about if *that's* what needed to happen. It really has been a controversial kind of thing pretty much the whole way at different points. I mean the main thing, I think, about their original recommendations was that beyond SARS one of the things they wanted to do was conduct a review of all curriculum on campus to see if there was

anything that we were teaching our students that was somehow promoting rape and sexual assault. Of course, I believe that pretty much everything we teach people in our society has a little inkling of that, so that would be a really hard thing to do anyways, but I think they just wanted to see if there was anything that was really blatant and specific, and a lot of it. The faculty had a problem with that, and felt like that was a restriction of free speech.

DW: Right. So, yeah, I did read some articles about that when that was happening. That was in—when was that? Well in '93, yeah, March of '93. So, SARS opened Fall of '92, so that was very shortly afterwards. Right. So, there was the Task Force recommendation for faculty to consider incorporating when appropriate content criticizing representation of rape and sexual assault as sanctioned cultural expression. That was the wording.

JE: See that seems like a pretty small request to me, but I guess it was—I mean, I guess I'm curious what was in there curriculum that they felt was in conflict with that, but I don't know.

DW: So, that was reworded by the President, it seems like. There was some original language...

JE: Was it? I don't really know exactly how that all panned out either.

DW: So, I was wondering if you could just comment, however. Just, again, from the articles that I've read there were very passionate Faculty Senate Meetings over this, and people standing up and shouting out, and speaking out. This may be a bit of a stereotype, but it seemed that most of the people in opposition to this were male faculty, at least as reported in the articles. There was one woman faculty member who was opposed to it, but by and large it seemed to be men who were very strongly speaking out against it. What is your take on that?

JE: Well, I mean I think that I guess it's not surprising at all to me, of course. I don't know. It's hard to say. I think this was a women's issue. I mean, I think men can understand, and can study and learn, and maybe they know people who've been in those situations. Men are assaulted themselves sometimes, like I think it's one in eight is the stat on that, but by in large it's really not something that they had felt personally. So, I think it's hard for them to understand why we should take such huge efforts. I mean, I think most men would agree that they don't want it to happen, they want to support women to some extent in saying that this isn't right and everybody should be safe in our society, and we should all have the opportunity to our lives in peace, and that kind of thing. But when it comes down to it, and there has to be a significant effort put out to support it, I think a lot of men had a hard time justifying that in their own mind, because they haven't ever been in that kind of a situation, and they don't—they just can't really understand at that level what that's about. I guess that's what I would say. I mean I don't—I wasn't there when this happened, and so I can't really say what the dynamics were between people, but just in general I guess if I had to comment on a situation like that I would say—that's what I would say. Men and women just have a very, I mean we have a different experience. So, our passions lie in different places on some issues.

DW: Ok. So, that definitely was one very controversial bit of the history of SARS. Do you want to share any other...

JE: Well, I think it's always...

DW: ...controversies that you've experienced?

JE: Well, I know that the women only space is changed now, which I think is good, but I know that that was a controversy at one point. Kind of, ok this is a women, well what if men want to help, or what if men need support, or what if men are survivors, or that kind of thing, and so that was a discussion for a long time. I think it changed in '94-'95, but I'm positive on that, when Kathy Joyce started. But I think that's good, I mean I think the whole feminist movement has evolved to some extent to be more inclusive of men. I think originally—I mean, I guess I'm not the ultimate, I don't know that much about it, but it seems to me from what I've observed here, as far as even in the Women's Center and different places, it started out as us needing to separate so that we kind of make a stand, and say this is what we are, and this is what we experience, and this is what we need. Then eventually it seemed like for a lot of the discussion was that if we really wanted to make change we needed to include men, because they're half of society. So, it sort of evolved, and I think that's part of what happened here as well, but I know for a long time it was an argument. Whether this should women only space, because it does provide a different kind of a feeling and different kind of a safety network, especially for a woman who's been assaulted or in an abusive relationship, but then what about the men? So, that's a big part of it.

I know there was another controversy, and I don't really feel comfortable talking about it, because I wasn't there, and because this is a really touchy subject, but it was when Victoria Schaller was the Coordinator; there was some controversy over some records that she had, I know. I don't know exactly what happened with them, but I do know that it was in the news and all kinds. I think there was a client, and I don't know, I think the client was unclear what she wanted done with her records, and so that of course put Victoria in a bad spot, because she didn't know whether she should release them or not. So, that was another kind of dark spot in SARS history. But, I think a good person to talk to about that would probably is Anne Dietrich because she was here then, or Cathy Joy, she was the one who took over after Victoria left, I think.

DW: So, I want to explore a little bit more something that you mentioned earlier, and that was SARS, the volunteers and the staff working in a traditional feminist structure that is being more of a collective non-hierarchical structure versus a very traditional structure. So, and I'm assuming that would include decision by consensus, and so how do you all find that that works for you, and how do you handle conflict amongst yourself when you're trying to strive to this feminist ideal?



JE: I think for us at this point there isn't a whole lot of conflict, because the structure is already created. We all are trained in the same methodology, the same sort of perspectives, and that kind of thing. Of course, everybody has their individual beliefs in different situations, but I think what happens a lot times in that is that—I mean generally the work that we do is done one on one, and so I leave it up to the individual peer counselor a lot. They're the one who is in that situation, I'm not there with them, and they decide what they say and what they are going to recommend that how they're going to deal with that, and I usually just support them. So, it's not like there is much conflict really. I mean there have been a few situation where there have discussion where a few different people felt like it could have been handled in a different way, but that's usually kind of up to whoever is the person in situation in the end. I think a lot the time when it might have been conflictual, and think that's what Women's Place experience was when they were trying to set it up to begin with, and people were trying to decide what the structure would look like, just kind of starting from scratch, and that would be hard.

DW: It gets harder the larger the organization is, so SARS has that going for it in that it's a smaller organization.

JE: I think that's true. Yeah, we're not that big.

DW: Women's Place I think grew pretty big towards the end and then it was more difficult to make a consensus decision.

JE: I have to say as well that I think that SARS is young, all of ours is our students, so I think that's another thing that makes it less conflictual in some ways. I think a lot of them are still sort of forming their ideas, and they have opinions but they're not—it's not the same as getting together a whole bunch of women who have been brought up and experience a ton of things, and putting them in one place and saying, okay here decide about whatever the issue is. I think that would be a little bit more difficult.

DW: Now, I'd like to bring up the topic of the intersection between race, class, and gender in the work that you all do here at SARS, and part of the original goals when SARS was being created was to do outreach with the Native American community on campus, and to do training in that culture, and also, then to do out reach for low income women. So, can you just comment on how that has been and what the status of that is now?

JE: I don't know. I guess what I have to say about that is it's been sort of variable, because we've had so many different coordinators and so many different—I mean there's just been a lot of changes here. It started out with—this is kind of the topic, I'm sorry. I'm just going to run through this really quickly. We started out with one coordinator, and then we had co-coordinators. Then that same year, which is the second year, they started an outreach component, which is what you are talking about. The first year they didn't have an outreach component, but then they started SARS/PROS. Which were like Student Assault Services, well then it was Sexual Assault Recovery Services/Peers Reaching Out, kind of long. It was part of

our Health Enhancement Program in conjunction with SARS that was doing outreach on sexual assault and relationship violence, and specifically they were targeting at risk groups, which a lot of times were like international students, Native Americans, different cultural minorities, and also freshmen—freshmen are at higher risk. So, that was part of the deal for a few years, and then I think a lot of it was due to funding and also there was a feeling of—okay, here is the theory that if the people at SARS were doing prevention work, like trying to prevent women from being sexually assaulted, that could be misconstrued, because some of the things that you might talk about would be like, “these things put you at risk, you shouldn’t do these things,” right. So, I think that people felt like maybe that message could be misconstrued, and people would be thinking that we were somehow blaming the victim if we were out there saying, “Ok, well, you need to not walk alone at night,” or something or, “You need to...” So, that was the feeling is that maybe SARS shouldn’t be doing that sort of outreach, because maybe it would be a conflictual message for folks if they heard us saying, “Women aren’t to blame, but at the same time women should be doing this.” At that point they moved the outreach portion upstairs to Health Enhancement and just put it back in with Peers Reaching Out with a certain group who did sexual assault issues and relationship violence issues.

Okay, so that was one thing, but what has happened in the last few years is that Health Enhancement has had a lot of pressure to work primarily on alcohol and drug issues, and so they haven’t been doing much prevention work at all. So, that was a real problem for me when I started this last year, because I feel like the outreach has pretty much just gone down the drain. I don’t know exactly where it got lost, but it feels to me like it’s not being done well at this point. I’ve been pressuring the administration and everyone, and writing grants, and trying to get more of an outreach component put back in to SARS. I feel like it doesn’t need to be a conflictual message, and if you’re doing it right people aren’t going to get confused. I mean, most of the education I would be doing in prevention work would not be—I mean don’t even tell people not to go out alone at night. That’s not part of what I say. I say you should be able to do whatever you want and be safe, because people shouldn’t be trying to rape you. But anyway, that has been sort of the evolution of that. So, I would say at this point in our history there is not a whole lot of outreach going on. I mean we have tried to do a little bit more this year just with the SARS advocates, so—

[End of Side A]

[Side B]

JE: —and we tried to send out some specifics to some of the minority groups on campus and that kind of thing. The International Women's Group came down and we did a presentation for them. We've been targeting, the last couple weeks we finally got in with the fraternities, so that's been exciting—kind of crazy, but it's good, really good. I mean a lot of those guys, I don't think had ever had anyone tell them what rape was or really what the law even said, so that's been good.

DW: Oh, excellent.

JE: But I'm hoping next year we can do a lot more outreach, and especially if we receive this grant, the idea is that we'll be able to form a specific part of SARS that does the outreach. So we'll have responding advocates, and then advocates who do outreach education work. At this point, unfortunately, I don't think we're quite living up to that. I mean of course we do a lot of diversity training for the advocates when they are learning how to be advocates and how to respond, and so they all have that. We really encourage anyone to come down, and we do get quite a few Native Americans especially, but it is something that we need to work on. I would say as far as just sort of theoretically the intersection, I don't know exactly how all that works. I do know that, I mean I guess in my mind it's just one thing on top of another that adds to the risk for a woman. Obviously, already, she's the "inferior gender" according to our society, and then especially if she's of some sort of minority culture, or if she has any kind of communication barriers. Depending on how she was raised, some cultures are even more subordinating or—I don't know how to describe it, but some cultures just make it even harder for a woman to express herself and assert herself and that kind of thing, so that of course does definitely put her more at risk for getting into a violent relationship or getting sexually assaulted.

DW: So, I want to ask about the training that you are doing with the fraternities for the first time now. What's the response been? Do you feel like the men have been receptive to the info that you're bringing? Do they engage in the material? Do they ask questions?

JE: Well they defiantly engage, they're not a quiet group by any group by any means, but they've been much more receptive then I would have imagined. I was pretty skeptical going in, which is bad, because I should be the one who's the most positive, but sometimes I can't be. But they were much more receptive then I thought, and I think a lot of it is just that they've never—nobody's even tried with this group of guys really to get that across. So, it was really a novelty for them for them, I think, more then anything. They were like, "What are these chicks doing? Huh?" So, but it was great. I mean they, and then we have another one next week. We actually have just done one so far, and we have one next week. It's a little intimidating for us, because we're not used to doing all male groups, actually because we go to there houses and do it. So, it's like this room full of big scary men. But I think it was good, I mean they definitely all listened. There were a few people in the back of the room that were kind of like, "Oh, this bullshit. I don't know who set this up," or whatever, but for the most part they were, even

those guys were listening. They were curious like what we had to say about the whole thing even if they believe us. But most of them were really into, and were really like, “Ok. Well, what about...” You know they all have all these theoretical situations—so, what if she’s drunk, and I’m drunk, and then it’s like this and this and this, so they’re trying to figure out, which is great because that’s what they should be thinking about. I mean, hopefully they’re using it to promote good and safe relationships rather than to figure about how to get around the law. That’s what I worry about a little bit, but for the most part it was really great. I think a lot of them learned a lot. A lot of them didn’t even know what the laws were, so they learned that, but also we talked about the culture and difference—that was really a shocker them. I don’t think anybody had really talked to them about that either, just about some different ideas about what in our culture specifically condones violence against women, and that kind of thing. Then we also talked about how they can help someone who’s been assaulted, because that’s something that we try to get across. Surprisingly, a lot of women do go to men when they’ve been assaulted, and I think it’s just because of the way that we’ve set it up. Men seem like the safest bet sometimes, or the most strong, or the person who can handle it. So, we talked about how to respond as well. They were good. We did evaluations afterwards and there were a couple negatives, but for the most part they were all pretty positive.

DW: So, now how does this compare to the experiences you have when you go and speak with groups of women, like you go into the dorms and talk to freshmen women?

JE: Yeah, and Women’s Center and different classrooms, which are usually mixed groups, but. In my experience for the most part men are always more verbal, unfortunately. I wish that... I mean in some cases women are able to, if it’s a really small group of women and they all know each other then they can get pretty into it, and pretty, but... But if it’s larger groups of women they usually, and especially if it’s mixed groups that’s when it’s really irritating, because then a lot of times it’s almost exclusively men. I specifically ask questions of the women and reach out to the women to get their input, because, I don’t know, it just feel good to me to be the only woman in the room saying this message that should be from all of this. So, that’s hard, but I come up with lots of different activities to kind of try and draw them out. So, that’s how, I guess the difference is that they are just, they’re just louder and they’re more assertive, and they’re [men] more challenging. I guess which is to be kind of expected.

DW: Yeah. It’s a little frustrating though. So, now let’s talk about the shift in the understanding of rape. I mean there was a time when date rape for instance wasn’t really acknowledged or understood or talked about or identified, and then there’s also different institutions, there’s the police force, there’s the medical establishment, there’s the legal establishment, and so let’s see, let’s just focus in on, let’s leave out those institutions for now, and just sort of in general talk about the shift in the understanding of rape, again date rape, blaming the victim, even the stats about how many women have raped. What’s your experience in these shifting attitudes in the time that you’ve been doing this work?

JE: Okay. I mean, since I've only been doing it for about five years, my training has been consistent as far as date rape was always been considered rape since I've been doing it, but I know that not that many years before that it wasn't necessarily a part of what was considered to be rape. Probably around, I would say probably around the time that these sort of centers stated being established was when that started coming up as an idea, like ten, fifteen years ago. The other agencies that I work with, I do a lot of work in conjunction with the Y in particular, but also we meet on a regular basis in different places with law enforcement, county attorney, different medical providers. The newest one being there's a sexual trauma program at St. Patrick's called First Step, and that's been a huge, that's caused a lot of networking just because part of the idea in installing a medical center that's specifically to examine. A medical center is that you have to involve everyone in the community, and sort of try and streamline a community response and that kind of thing. So, in that experience which has just been in the last two year, I think we've communicated more with the other entities in the community than we ever had before that, which has been great. It has also been discouraging in a lot of ways, because you see exactly where you're at, you can't pretend anymore that everybody understands things the way that you do. So, I guess what I have to say is that in law enforcement it's kind of variable, some of them are really on board with the idea that without consent is rape, and other folks are still sort of with the idea that if physical force isn't involved then it's not rape. I think right now that's the big area of contention is the physical force versus coercion kind of thing, like if he didn't threaten her bodily harm is it still a rape? If her consent was given under duress somehow, if there was some kind of coercion or if she just didn't say anything is that a rape? So, that's kind of the area where it's still sort of fuzzy I think and people disagree.

One thing that happened in the last—well, you're going to get this later but I'll just say it now— one thing that happened in the last legislative session was that they added a few words to our Montana Laws, the definition of what rape is. I think that will come into affect in October when they'll actually start applying it, but they are that in the portion where they're talking about what consent is and isn't, they have under there force, threat of force—like if they threaten to hurt the women—but the three things that they added were if the perpetrator uses coercion, deception or surprise. Which is great, because that will just give the county attorneys so much more to work with if they have rape cases. So, I mean, I think that that was a pretty big step just that people were able to agree on the fact that those things should be included. A lot of that was in response to two cases that have happened just in the last couple years in Missoula specifically, and that was the Haser Case, which was the photographer who was molesting the women that he was photographing, and I can't remember the massage therapist's name, but the massage therapist who was molesting his clients. In both of those cases they've had a really hard time prosecuting because our law doesn't necessarily cover those. In both of those cases it was more of like a surprise, kind of a little bit of deception going on where the person didn't necessarily say no because they didn't know he was going to do that to them all of the sudden—that he was going fondle that, that his hands were going to slide down to their breasts, or that he was going put a finger in their vagina for instance, or whatever.

So, I think that that is a big step in the right direction that's going on now. I mean once the law changes it really does help all the people who are out there in the field be able to say, "See, everybody agrees that this is rape," or whatever you're talking about, I think that will be really helpful for us. So, I still think there's a lot of people out there who disagree but I think it's changing, and it's changing fairly quickly. I don't think it's changing that quickly in the minds of the general public, which is what's hard. I just, for some reason it's hard for us to get that information out there. You know, while I know that to be true that the law change, I didn't see a lot of it in the papers. I don't know that many people who even know what the law was to begin with, much what the changes are now. So, I don't know. I guess I just feel like that's where our work is really kind of cut out for us right now. We can all agree in our little sphere, in our little prevention network what it is, but if nobody knows then it's not really going to make much difference.

DW: So, any other, that's a big change in the law, anything else happen this past legislative session?

JE: There's a lot of stuff that we tried to get that we didn't get. Most of the violence against women stuff was supported but wasn't expanded that much. They did expand what they call Full Faith and Credit, which is when a woman gets an order of protection against her partner—well, I guess a man can against his partner as well, I shouldn't be so gender specific, but most often it's a woman—in the past it's been hard for them to travel to other places, even other counties and also other states, and have it be respected and honored and taken seriously by the police force there. So, now with Full Faith and Credit, hopefully once it's installed—I mean they have a lot of sort of administrative stuff they're going to have to do to make it effective as far as having a network computer program and stuff like that—but eventually women will be able to travel and go different place and know that their order of protection is still going work. So, that's the idea with that law. That's one of the big ones that happened. I'm trying to think of what else. I can't remember off hand if a couple of them actually ended up passing, so I'm sorry. I can't remember it right now.

DW: That's okay. So, you did talk about the law, to law enforcement and just now the legislature and law, so what about the medical establishment? What is your opinion about how that institution is working with this issue right now?

JE: Well, I mean we've definitely done a lot of work in the last couple years in that area. A lot of the facilities in town have facilities in town have nurses who have been trained in the SANE [Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner] Method—I can't remember what exactly that stands for—but basically they've been trained in how to respond to women who've been sexually assaulted, and how to best do an examination so that they can get the best evidence and that kind of thing. Then of course the biggest on that just happened last October was the opening of the First Step Program. The main thing that they have there that's helpful is they have a culdoscope, which is a piece of equipment that can videotape really minute internal injuries.

That's great as far as evidence goes, they can videotape the inside of a woman's vagina and see small contusions or bruises and that kind of thing, which is really great for evidence.

So, that's the main thing that they have there, but what has also happened in conjunction with that is just that we meet on a monthly basis. We also do case review on a monthly basis, so everybody in town who works with these women is talking together about okay, now where is this case at? Is she going to prosecute or not? Why? What happened? Who dropped the ball? Which is going to be really helpful in the long run. We just started that a couple of months ago, so it's hard to say right now exactly where that will go, but that's been really great. So, I guess I think the medical profession is really trying. I mean it definitely seems like it's a priority right now, at least here. The only thing that has been hard in the development of this program is that their theories and their perspective is a little bit different than ours in that they really want to see reports and prosecution, and so, that was a tough one for us. That was a lot of the arguing that went on at the first meetings was whether if a woman came in there for an examination then they were call the police and she was required to report. So, that has been a big discussion, and at this point I think we are all agreed, it's still sort of like a little shaky, but I think we're all agreed that they're not going to call the police unless she wants them to call the police. So, that's good because, of course, one of our main things coming from kind of an empowerment perspective is that all of the choices need to remain with the woman who is the survivor. One of main things about rape that can be traumatizing is that it took your choice away, so we really feel like every opportunity we need to give a choice back to her. So, that was one of the main things that we argued about in the development of this program, and that is still hard. I mean law enforcement and medical, pretty much everybody, except for the advocates of course, really still believe that a woman needs to report and needs to—you know, I think it's great when they and I support anyone all the way, but it's such a hard process and it's totally understandable if a woman isn't able to do that, and she needs to take care of herself first. I mean it's tough because I know in the long run the more prosecutions we have the quicker things are going to change, that's why it's hard for me, but I would never, of course, encourage a woman to do it she didn't want to. That's not my place. We just encourage them to do what they need to do for their own healing process, so that's...

DW: That's a very big difference and you can see the difference between feminist methodology and the general public. So, let's talk about that a little bit more, if you want to talk about some other types of feminist ideology or methodology, and how that gets then played out in, well you're talking about in counseling a woman afterwards, but also in the support group and advocacy and reporting, and all of the things that you all provide. Can you just tell us what some of those feminist...

JE: Yeah. Well, I mean I think the main thing is kind of what I stated real briefly there is just that in every step, every service that we provide that's always the main thing that we emphasize in the training of our advocates is that this is the place where this woman is in control. Whatever else has happened to in her life, whatever her experience might be, whatever choices have been taken from her in the past this is the place where she gets it all back. I think it's hard

especially for women because a lot of us have been brought up to try and take care of each other and other people and it's hard for us to let go of that sometimes when you're in that room and you're alone and she says something that you feel like is really going to be harmful to her, whether it's she's going back to that person who's hurt her so much or that she's using really bad coping mechanism. It's really hard not to want to say, "Oh, no. Don't do that. We'll take care of you,"—no. But that's not the methodology that we teach our advocates, and what do teach them is that their job is to support her, and to tell her that she's the one who gets to make the decisions and whatever she decides that's what we're going to go with, and we're going to be there every step of the way, but she's the one whose in charge of the ship or whatever. She's the one who gets to call the shots. So, yeah, it's a very feminist idea, and hard for a lot of people to understand as well. Especially when you get family members or other people who are involved in a situation and are like, "Why did you let her do this?" Well, you know she gets to do whatever she wants.

DW: Yeah, I can see how that would be difficult at times.

JE: So, that wasn't—I don't know how well articulated that was...

DW: Oh, that was great.

JE: But that's sort of the very basic, and the other part is just the equal sharing of power, I think. The idea that everybody here has valid opinion and has something to add depending on their experience, and that we are more powerful and can make better decisions and can be a stronger organization if we are inclusive of everyone's ideas and opinions and that kind of thing.

DW: Ok, great. Now I want to bring up a new topic, and I think I have this right, it's the USCA, University Sexual Assault Council?

JE: Oh, UCSA. University Council on Sexual Assault.

DW: University Council on Sexual Assault, so can you tell what that is, and what there doing? How that came about?

JE: Ok. Well, they're basically, I think, originally they were kind of an outgrowth of the task force that was established to assess the problem on campus. Once they figured it and once they made their recommendations and once they created SARS, they were sort of like, "Ok. Where do we go from here? Is that enough or do we still need to be doing something?" At that point, I think—I mean I'm not sure who made the original decision, but what they are is the Presidential Council that reports to the President on what's going on in that area on campus. So, it has some of the same members of the original task force still. Jennifer Waltz is the Committee Chair, and basically it's hard because I think it has, I mean it's been over the years the emphasis on the problem has really sort of been lost, unfortunately. I think for a while it was really in the media and really a big deal and so then there was a lot of energy put into it,



and now the council has a lot less energy, unfortunately. But it's still there, and I think basically their function is to just kind of try and assess what's going on with sexual assault on campus. If there is any area in which we need to be doing more work, or whether we need to be assessing the problem better, or whether there are different things that would help with prevention work, just the whole scope of it that they're just sort of the monitoring agency on campus. They have a small budget, and usually what they do—I mean everybody, there's probably only about ten members now, but the main ones who still attend on a regular basis are somebody from Women's Studies is usually there, there's usually a Social Work person, a Law person, somebody from Psychology, SARS, and Health Enhancement. Those are the main ones, Law Enforcement comes very periodically, or sporadically—that's what I meant to say. So, what they've done with their money in the past few years has mainly been supports in the SARS and Health Enhancement kind of outreach efforts. They brought in a couple different speakers at different points. They've helped sponsor Take Back the Night activities, and some of the Vagina Monologues activities that the Women's Center does. So, that's mainly what they've been doing of late. There has been some discussion—some of us would really like to repeat the original survey to find out exactly what is going on with sexual assault on campus. I don't feel like right now we know for sure. I mean most campuses when they do a survey get pretty consistent results, which are pretty consistent with national trends. So, probably that's a lot of what we would get back, but I do feel like we haven't done a survey in ten years and I think it would be beneficial to just know for certain what's going on out there. How many women have experienced it? What their experiences have been? I would also like to do some research on what the students themselves feel would be most helpful, and how much they know about our services and other response agencies and that kind of thing in the community. So, hopefully some research will be done sometime soon, and the University Council on Sexual Assault is the entity that would sort of support that and be in charge of that.

DW: Yeah, well good. Ok.

JE: I think another function I just have to mention real quickly that they provided at different points for SARS is being sort of the outside critique or whatever of what SARS does. They're sort of our umbrella organization or whatever, and they have assessed our services at different points and made recommendations and that kind of thing too. So, that's another function that they do.

DW: Ok. Well we're just getting to the end of the tape here so I want to bring it back and end on a more personal note again. Just if you could, just talk about how personally this work has effected you and changed you in the experience of that, and maybe some personal highlights of the work that you've done?

JE: Ok. Well, I mentioned before, and I think it's really true that so far in my life this is the thing that I've found to be the most satisfying, and that I've felt good about. That I felt like this is the place where I can make a difference, where I can sit down with a woman and we can talk, and it's going to change something and it's going to make a difference in somebody's life and in our

society at a larger level as well. Also in the experience of doing this work it's changed me, of course. It's made I think a lot stronger, and a lot more outspoken, and lot more—it's almost as if after you hear these stories you have an obligation somehow to make sure... I mean it sound like I would ever go and tell a woman's story, but to make sure that the spirit of that story is somehow verbalized to the larger community. So, that I mean they trusted with this for a reason. They told you that because they think that you can do something about it, and so I think that has changed me in that I do feel an obligation, and feel that part of my life's work is to make sure that this is something that isn't kept silent, and isn't just something that I hear about in my office, but is also something that's part of the community conversation that goes on. I really feel like I've been privileged in that this is something that has touched me deeply, and I don't know if everybody in there is able to live a life where their life's work is something that they believe in their heart to be an important thing. So, yeah, I feel lucky I guess to have found this as something I can do with my life, and that I would be doing anyways but now I get paid to do it.

DW: Yeah, that's always nice.

JE: So, yeah, but I have to say that there are times when I just break down, because I think—I don't know, I just feel like I'm so privileged to get to be there at that moment when a woman's life changes.

DW: Ok. Well, thank you very much, Jennifer.

DW: You're welcome.

[End of Interview]