Early Career
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I came to UC Berkeley in 1971, the same year that Christina Maslach was hired. We were the first two women to join the psychology department with regular faculty positions. At that time, I was largely oblivious to the gender aspects of the situation. That the faculty members were all men seemed natural to me. During my job interview, when I was told that the luncheon for me would be in the Women's Faculty Club because women were not allowed in the regular Faculty Club, I found it quaint and rather charming. I didn't think to worry when, at the party after my job talk, a frowning person pointed out to me that faculty wives were talking to me more than was usual.

What I did worry about was an error in the materials I had brought for the talk. Ironically that turned out to be, perhaps, one of the factors leading to my being hired. The work I was presenting began with a series of experiments on color categorization in the Dani people of the highlands of Indonesian New Guinea where I had traveled with my anthropologist husband Karl Heider. The problem was that I had accidentally left behind my slides of the colors I had used, and the very properties that made colors ideal for the research made them impervious to communication without people actually seeing them. I was horrified when I discovered this until I realized that the two people who had initiated the study of cultural color categories (Brent Berlin and Paul Kay) were at Berkeley. Surely, they would have a display of Munsell color chips that I could borrow. They did, and not only did they come to my talk with the needed display, but they turned up with a cohort of interested faculty and students from anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, computer science and biology.

The upshot was that Chris Maslach was rightly hired for the social psychology position for which we were both interviewing, and the department asked for a second position for me as a Target of Opportunity. The University granted that, and I came. This narrative exemplifies the kind of support (and at times serendipity) I've received from colleagues and staff throughout my career here without which whatever I've accomplished would not have been possible.

The UC Berkeley psychology department was an odd place to be in the 1970s. It was divided into three groups, formed some years previously to give partial autonomy to warring hard and soft science factions in the department, but it no longer seemed a good map of faculty interests. Cognitive psychology didn't fit into any of the groups, and this was creating strain for me. When I spoke to the chair about it, he said that was wonderful because no one felt well placed in the group system, so the more stress that was built up, the sooner it would change. Never had I felt so privileged to be feeling vexed. So it came to pass, smaller groups that fit people's actual interests, at least for a while.

Then there was teaching. The early 70s was a time just emerging from the Free Speech Movement. My first undergraduate lecture class, in which I was trying to teach the wondrous new cognitive psychology, was not going well. The students were not shy about challenging me to show them how any of it would make a difference in their lives, and I've tried to take this as a guiding light for teaching ever since. In the early 1980s students again began demanding changes in course offerings, giving the psychology department a list of classes they wanted instituted, one of which was on meditation and Eastern thought. Knowing that I had become interested in Eastern psychologies, the chair asked me to teach such a class. That class, along with a class on sleep and dreams that I instituted years later, had the advantage that students came to it pre-interested in the subject matter. With the added ability to use PowerPoint to mix pictures, sounds, and text with a lecture, I began to think of lectures as an art form, and teaching such classes became a new delight.

Throughout my career here, I have felt supported in my endeavors. If there was ever an issue about my being a woman, I was not privy to it. Whatever biases may have existed toward females, my papers were eventually published in suitable journals, and I was promoted appropriately. All of this does not mean, however, that gender was not an issue in my work and life. Where being a woman mattered significantly was in my private life. My husband and I split up my second year at Berkeley, a common crisis time for academic marriages. Subsequent dating was largely a disaster. In the early days I felt that if only I were a man, I could have a wife who would appreciate that I worked so much, and would provide companionship and do wifely things to make it easier for me. That is long since past, but occasionally I do remember thinking that—and smile.