**LEVERHULME WOMEN AND THE HISTORY OF**

**INTERNATIONAL THOUGHT PROJECT**

**Anne Sisson RUNYAN**

Interviewer : Sarah DUNSTAN

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[Post-Interview Note from Anne Sisson Runyan: In editing my interview transcript in Summer 2020, I, as the interviewee, also added some material that speaks to the contemporary moment of the pandemic and other relevant crises that emerged after the interview.]

*I am conducting an interview, over the phone, for the Leverhulme Women and History of International Thought Project with Professor Anne Sisson Runyan. Would you mind confirming your name and spelling it for the record, please?*

Yes, my full name is Anne Sisson Runyan. Sisson is my middle name. The spelling is A-n-n-e … middle name S-i-s-s-o-n … last name R-u-n-y-a-n.

*Are you happy for me to call you by that name during the interview?*

Sure, you can call me Anne.

*Let’s begin … where were you born?*

I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA.

*What did your parents do for work?*

My father was an attorney who did largely corporate work in labour law. My mother, a Smith College government major, was one of the first women to work for IBM, during World War II and just after it. Then she raised four girls and went back for a Master’s degree and became a librarian, working primarily for a city public library.

*Did you go to school there, in Cincinnati?*

Very briefly. My family moved after my first grade year, to Haddonfield, New Jersey, a suburb of Philadelphia. Most of my pre-college education was there--the rest of elementary school, junior high (what some call middle school) and most of my high school. My parents moved back to Ohio, actually to Dayton. These were moves associated with my father’s work--he worked in New Jersey for RCA and then came back to Ohio to work for NCR.

That was my last year of high school, during which I also had an opportunity to take courses at the University of Dayton to gain college credits, so I did that last year part-time in high school and part-time in university.

*What subjects were you studying?*

I took Anthropology courses for the most part. I can’t remember what else. In high school at the same time, I finished up such classes as Fine Arts and Advanced Placement English and French. So by the time I finished high school, I already had racked up a fair amount of university credits.

*What were your favourite subjects at the time?*

At the time—my last year in high school? I certainly was interested in the focus on indigenous ways of knowing in my university Anthropology class. I very much enjoyed my final high school French, Fine Arts, and English classes. I also, earlier during high school, was very active in creating new clubs in a time of great ferment … social ferment. I co-created an environmental issues club, focused on tree planting and participating in the first Earth Day march, and the first women’s liberation club, through which we advocated for birth control information in my high school library

I was active in a lot of clubs and I did a lot of extracurricular of reading on my own as I had older sisters in university who introduced me to authors they were reading. This was in the late-sixties/early-seventies, so I read many works by Simone de Beauvoir and Sylvia Plath and other works by women popular at the time. So I was in the process of educating myself, including in reading groups with some of my high school friends, to learn some classic feminist work.

**0:05:42**

*That’s really cool. You mentioned that your sisters perhaps influenced your reading choices. Were a lot of your friends reading the same kinds of books? Were you recommending different books to each other?*

Well, those of us in the women’s liberation club also went to our first feminist conference at Temple University in Philadelphia. It was also a period when Vietnam War moratorium marches were going on, so I went to several of those in Philadelphia as well as the first Earth Day march there. This was all during high school.

So the groups that I was in were reading some similar things and acting in similar ways. My sisters, who were seven years older and were twins, studied abroad in Paris and were there during the 1968 uprising. They were both studying French at the time and so were very much influenced by European writers and French feminists of the time. They introduced me to some of that literature and then other works I found on my own.

*That’s extraordinary. So you mentioned your coterie of friends who were involved in these clubs at the school. Was there a particular teacher that mentored you?*

No, there wasn’t one in particular. I think high school teachers in those days were fairly, shall we say, straight-laced but I did have some teachers along the way who animated me in different ways. I had a great female Biology teacher and an interesting male teacher in my Fine Arts class who took us to many cultural events. I had a Latin teacher from Italy in my early high school years, who held a PhD in Philosophy and encouraged students to be interested in international life and classical readings.

Teachers were not involved in the feminist and environmental clubs and activism some of us engaged in. We as students just created and participated in them in the midst of becoming aware of what was happening more broadly around us.

This included being in the midst of the 1972 Presidential campaign. I was too young to vote in that, but I did some early brief volunteering for Shirley Chisholm, who was the first African American woman to run for President of the United States, and then later volunteered for the George McGovern campaign, as a canvasser for the Democratic party. Of course, Nixon prevailed, but I cut my teeth in some actual formal political canvassing and meetings in that context.

**0:09:58**

*Yes, absolutely. Both of those experiences would have been, I imagine, incredible. Would you mind saying a little bit more about them?*

This was a period when the draft lottery was in effect and so I, especially towards my latter years in high school, knew some young men who were being drafted. My family even harboured a soldier who had gone AWOL from the military during the Vietnam War for a brief time, before he went back to be placed in the brig and then given a discharge.

This was also a period prior to Roe v. Wade in 1973 and I knew high school students who had become pregnant and even went to Mexico for abortions. So, clearly, it was a period in which there was a lot of ferment and when people I knew were getting caught up either in the war machine or lack of reproductive rights.

The 1972 presidential candidates’ campaigns of the time ranging from Eugene McCarthy and Shirley Chisholm to George McGovern pressed for peace and social change. So I think that many issues were being raised and coming together at the same time. If you were politically active in any way, then you were involved in a lot of different forms of politics.

*I can imagine those intersecting in very interesting ways. The idea of young women making the trip to Mexico to get abortions is a frightening one. It’s a long way to go.*

This was rare, but I did grow up in communities with relative privilege--white middle-class communities with well-funded schools, little racial diversity, and relative class privilege that would enable some students to travel.

When New York liberalized abortion laws by 1971, and with a rising sense of sexual freedom, there was much more sense that something had to give on women’s reproductive rights.

*Definitely. You mentioned that you had one of your sister’s friends … a young man that you were hiding in your house. Were your parents politically active?*

They had grown up Republican in Ohio and then carried on that affiliation once we moved east, but what changed them radically was the Kent State University murders in 1970. Having been from Ohio and to see the Ohio National Guard under a Republican governor gun down students … peace protesters … in a period when their own older daughters were in college … was a singular moment, especially for my father. I remember him weeping with the television coverage of that massacre. That actually changed them … they voted Democratic in the 1972 election for George McGovern and for the rest of their lives.

**0:15:15**

*Wow, that’s an incredible moment in history.*

Yeah.

*To return to the subject of your schooling. You mentioned taking the Anthropology courses at your local university. What drew you to Anthropology in that context?*

I don’t remember exactly but I remember that one of the texts we read was a book on the ‘Yaqui Way of Knowledge’. It looked interesting to me … the focus on Indigenous culture. I’d always been interested in questions of myths and mythology and cosmologies and so I think that appealed to me to take courses like that--thinking about other ways of living and being. It was also a more an eclectic choice that happened to suit my schedule too as I took high school classes in the morning and university courses in the afternoon.

*That sounds like a pretty heavy schedule. So when you came to make choices about going to college and choosing topics, what were you thinking at that time that you wanted to do?*

I got very interested in the work of Marshall McLuhan, who taught at the University of Toronto, and his concept of the media is the message. My family had summered all my life in Canada. My paternal grandparents had a summer cottage there, which then went to my father upon his marriage. Thus, I grew up bi-national in a sense with an affinity for Canada.

Although I had applied to a number of schools in the US, I was particularly interested in thinking about Canada as well and realised that it would be an option for me, so initially I thought I might go to the University of Toronto, where Marshall McLuhan taught but he only taught graduate courses. Because I had some French background and I was interested in being in a cosmopolitan city, I ended up going to McGill in Montreal after I was accepted at a number of other schools in the US and in Ontario. This gave me the experience of living in a bilingual place where I could also pursue a communications programme, but it was largely focused on film.

So, during my first year in which I took mostly general education courses, studying with some interesting people from Philosophy to Biology and taking a few communications courses, I realised that I wouldn’t be able to focus more on communications research of the type associated with McLuhan.

I decided to transfer to the University of Windsor that had a pretty strong communications department and had offered me an undergraduate teaching assistantship. I also was offered a job working in what was then called Master Control, which was basically assisting with student television programme production.

**0:20:01**

*That sounds fascinating.*

That was attractive to me at the time. I loved Montreal and it was hard to leave that beautiful city, but it seemed to make more sense to more quickly complete my degree in an area that most interested me and with the kind of support Windsor offered me.

The first year I spent at McGill and the last two I spent at Windsor (as a result of transferring so many university and advanced placement credits) enabled me to study communications more with respect to communications policy. It was a period in which there was a rise of concern about cultural imperialism and countries, including Canada, which was awash in US media, were interested in creating their own media content to re-represent themselves. So I became involved in that kind of communications research.

*That sounds fascinating. What kind of work were you doing when you moved to Windsor as firstly as a teaching assistant? What kind of courses were you on and, secondly, in terms of the kind of experience that you got with television or media control … what kind of programmes were you working on?*

I was a TA for at least one course that I can recall for a very unconventional professor, who would do a lot of performance work in the classroom to get people to think about different ways of imagining the intersection between art and performance and visual production. He would do some very graphic performances in the classroom to sort of shock students to bring out more creativity in their approach to media production.

In terms of my work in Master Control, I was oftentimes just assisting students who were producing their own shows through camera and audio control work. I didn’t do much media production myself. I was much more interested in the research end of it, but a man I met through the programme, who I ultimately married, was active in productions, some of which I would help him make, such as an animation film. He also made a film on ‘Mr Whipple Makes a Movie’, which was a slapstick spoof on what not to do in filmmaking.

Although I was not among students who engaged most in TV and film production, I further assisted them with their productions by either playing some role or in the editing process.

*My next question was going to be about the cohort of students that you were with at both McGill and Windsor. Were they thinking in similar terms to you, do you think? And were they … was there an even spread of men and women?*

**0:24:41**

No, nothing particularly unique. I did have an unusual experience at Windsor. I ended up living in a small fraternity house when I began to live with my partner. We eventually moved to our own apartment, but I did live for a time awash with men. Several were also studying communications, typically on the production side. Women tended to be a bit more in the research end or in journalism, reflecting somewhat of a gender division of labour in terms of technical versus verbiage interests.

*Yeah, definitely.*

McGill was more political in the sense that there was a relatively strong Marxist group on campus. There was a student strike at the time for the janitorial workers so I remember not crossing picket lines there.

I was very active when I was at McGill in peer counselling, staffing an office where we would help students in crisis. Windsor was a less political place, and I was just mostly focused on completing my degree as I knew I would go on to graduate school.

*Okay. So when you finished your degree at Windsor, what … where did you want to go next?*

It was a period in which there was no formal women’s studies, at least not at McGill nor at Windsor. Such programmes started in the United States by 1970, but were still not widespread by the mid-1970s, so I continued to self-teach in that area.

*Okay, and you had particular books or individuals that stood out as being very influential to you in that time … on that subject?*

I don’t recall having any feminist professors as an undergraduate. All my professors at McGill were male, but at Windsor there was one female professor in the communications department. I wouldn’t call her ideologically feminist, although I think she might have had some feminist sensibility as the sole woman in the department. Perhaps different from the US, I don’t recall any active women’s organizations on my undergraduate campuses in Canada. So I would say I experienced a bit of a hiatus in thinking more about feminism in a scholarly or activist way.

*Okay, that makes sense. So when you reached the end of your studies there what did you want to do next?*

I always wanted to go to graduate school. At the time, one of my older sisters was living in Washington, DC and she had completed a Master’s degree at American University which I learned had a pretty good communications programme so I decided to move there and explore graduate options.

**0:29:53**

Although my partner worked for a US-based company in Windsor after graduation, he could not transfer to the US for at least a year. The only way he could move with me from Canada to Washington, DC was if we got married for him to gain a Green Card immediately and transfer to his company’s office in the DC area. So, just after the election of Jimmy Carter, we were married by a judge named Jimmy Carter in a small courthouse in Ontario and then moved to DC in late 1976.

I got a job there with a publishing company and then applied for graduate school. I ended up not in the communications programme at American but in a public relations graduate programme there which focused on government public information. During that two-year Master’s programme. I studied critical questions about government secrecy and propaganda as well as intercultural comunication and the public information activities of various Federal and State government agencies.

I also held a graduate assistantship and research associateship with the newly created Institute for Government Public Information within the programme. We held conferences on government public service advertising and government information best practices, and I contributed my first co-authored articles to a book on informing the public.

*That sounds like a fascinating programme. Were you doing that whilst also working at the publishing house or had you finished up with …?*

I did … my first six months I worked full-time and started the Master’s through night classes. The last year and a half I was able to leave my job to assume the graduate assistantship and research associateship.

*Did you find that the work at the publishing house was complementary to the kind of thing that you were studying in the Masters’?*

In a sense, since the downtown publishing company produced publications for the utilities industry and its lobbying association in DC. I also worked for a brief time with a lobbying consulting firm after completing my Master’s which brought me into contact with some legislators—including the early wave of ultra-conservative ones. At the same, with the inauguration of Carter, there was a kind of a folksy populist feel in DC.

We were living in the city near Dupont Circle at the time prior to gentrification, so it was very mixed income and diverse with a fair amount of poor people and poor peoples’ housing in the neighbourhood. I volunteered briefly with a halfway house in the neighbourhood and this provided a sense of reciprocal care as we knew and were known by our neighbours struggling at the margins.

**0:35:06**

For example, the courses that I took during my Masters were not only at the American University campus but were also held in the evenings at government buildings, such as the Commerce Department. I would often take the bus back home from there late at night. At the time, there were a lot of sex workers at the bus stop. My husband would meet me at the bus stop and bring coffee for the sex workers and we would chat.

It was a time prior to the subway, which we watched being built, and many protest marches came down 16th Street where we lived towards the White House. And we also participated in many of them—No Nukes in particular sticks in my mind. . It was an interesting time not just academically but also in terms of the political time and place.

*Yeah, I can imagine it was an absolutely fascinating time. Was it a bit of a shock to the system after living in Canada? Did you find that transition interesting?*

Yeah, in a sense, it was more home to me, but amidst all the government workers and their pecking orders and the many young people attracted to the city, we had a lot of Canadian friends, even some people I had known from my family’s summer cottage area. Surprisingly, in my first class in my Master’s programme, a woman sitting across from me at the seminar table was from Toronto and had a cottage a block away from mine in Ontario. Thus, DC at the time was quite a cross-roads of people.

Fairly soon after my Master’s, I entered the doctoral programme in International Relations at American, attracted to its international communications component.

I gained a graduate assistantship with the director of the International Communications programme within the School of International Service (SIS). He was from Tehran and it was the time of the Iranian Revolution, which was mobilized in part by “small media” via the mosques. I was active in the International Communications Association (ICA), which was particularly focused on the demands of the Global South for a New World Information Order, as well as the International Studies Association, going to my first meeting of that around 1980.

*Did you find that a lot of people from your Masters’ Programme go on to do this Doctoral programme?*

No, no one but me.

*So did they follow other Doctoral programmes or did they go into government positions like the one you initially started in?*

Many in my Master’s programme already worked for government, but I’m not really sure what happened for most of them in terms of continued or new work or study.

**0:39:56**

*Okay. What was your cohort like in the Doctoral programme?*

Mostly men! But quite international, particularly from the Middle East. Some worked for the US or their home governments and others were traditional doctoral students.

My first course was International Relations Theory taught by Nick Onuf, who ultimately became my dissertation chair. He is now known as a major contributor to constructivist IR, thus he was already open to my more unorthodox and eventually my feminist approach.

I’d taken a few IR courses in my undergraduate days, but had more of an expectation to focus on relations in an international context (intercultural/communicative) rather than states and their relative lack of them.

However, Nick Onuf did create some space for thinking about relations. I remember that when he taught us about the Correlates of War project, he likened it to the art form of pointillism. This gave me permission for my paper in his course in response to the assigned question of ‘What does International Relations mean to you?’ to employ the work of visual critic Susan Sontag to interrogate representations of the field. Other students in the class didn’t understand what I was doing, but he gave me an A+ for the paper for its interdisciplinary innovation.

So that kept me in the programme, which otherwise I might have been alienated from.

*You mentioned that, during your grad school was the first time you attended the ISA and was it the International Communications Association as well?*

**0:44:58**

Yeah, in the case of ISA, the first time I went it was like what Carol Cohn later aptly described in reference to security experts as “white men in ties comparing missile size” in Cold War times. I only went to a couple of ICA meetings, which involved more critical content around the New World Information Order, new media, and labour and representational issues, although also largely populated by men.

My feminist turn in the IR programme, however, was in part via taking a feminist Marxist-oriented anthropology elective on women and work over time and across cultures. I also linked up with some female students late in my coursework who were focusing on development studies within SIS, which sparked my interest further in women, work, and development.

It was also a period in which I was self-teaching on feminist political theory, reading work by Susan Okin, Wendy Brown, and others who were engaging in feminist critiques of classical political theorists, particularly for their masculinism that very much undergirded what I was learning about IR.

I also had this long personal history of anti-militarism activism going back to my high school days. This also led me to seek out material on women’s peace activism, leading me also to link with some peace studies associations. Excavating women’s peace thought and movements over time and across cultures and juxtaposing their concepts of peace and security with how “male-stream” international relations constructed them became the focus of my dissertation proposal.

*That would have been incredibly innovative for its time and now … you mentioned that the first paper that you got the A+ for used Susan Sontag’s ‘On photography’ analysis and that the other students did not necessarily understand what you were getting at. I wonder if you were you faced with a kind of nonplussed reaction from other students in your cohort as you developed the proposal for your dissertation?*

I don’t know that I was judged per se, as most of my dissertation work was done in absentia as we moved back to Canada after my coursework. While others were busy doing quantitative or policy work, I was thinking about theory. My topic, however, was an inspiration to other women in later SIS cohorts, including Spike Peterson, who pursued feminist dissertation topics.

*So how did you …*

**0:49:56**

While in the process of teaching myself feminist political theory and women’s peace movement histories, I remember being at some guest lecture by some Canadian diplomat about Canada as a middle power. I seem to recall I queried him about the absence of women diplomats and how they might think about the concept of middle powers and peace after hearing him saying some very sexist things. I called him on it with my query and that wasn’t taken too well.

*Good for you!*

The fortunate thing is that Nick Onuf was my dissertation chair and he just let me go with a feminist approach although he was unfamiliar with it.

So that was freeing, although without much guidance as I figured much of it out on my own while developing and writing it while living back in Canada where my husband took new jobs first in Alberta and then in Ontario. The raw materials for it initially came from becoming involved in the women’s peace movements in Edmonton, especially the anti-nuclear movement at a time when the Canadian North was becoming more militarized in the face of Cruise missile testing.

I was also involved in feminist reading groups through the local women’s bookstore where I volunteered, deepening my understanding of a variety of radical and socialist feminist texts. I also deepened my understanding of the relationship between gender violence and international violence through my work in the local sexual assault centre, on the Alberta Status of Women Commission, and for the Alberta Society Against Violence Against Women for which I helped organize a conference and did consulting work.

Further raw materials and proto-fieldwork came from my participation in International Women’s Studies Institutes, organized by feminist political theorist Ellen Boneparth, then at San Diego State University, which brought North American women and women from host countries/regions together for intensive shared learning experiences. The first I attended was in Israel/Palestine that entailed significant focus on and many dialogues with members of women’s peace and anti-occupation movements. Another was held in Kenya, which focused on women and development and entailed participation in the final UN Decade for Women Conference NGO Forum in Nairobi where I served on peace panels and made contacts with peace movement women. I produced articles on these on-the-ground experiences and honed my sense of the relationships among equality, peace, and development that were the planks of the UN Decade for Women. I also spent a little time at the Greenham Common women’s peace camp in the UK and the women’s peace camp in Rome, New York in this period.

**0:54:42**

As a result of the many contacts I was making by the mid-1980s, I became active with the Canadian Voice of Women (VOW) headquartered in Toronto, when we moved back to Ontario from Alberta.

VOW had its roots in the early-sixties, similar to Women’s Strike For Peace in the US. Although begun as an anti-nuclear organization and still heavily populated by older women founders, they along with younger feminists in the wake of the Nairobi conference and its Forward Looking Strategies were prompted to organize a year-long series of conferences across Canada, culminating in an international conference in Halifax on the subject of women’s alternative approaches to security. These series of conferences, which I either attended as a participant observer or relied upon the substantial archives of them, became my case study for my dissertation on feminist perspectives on peace and security.

*That sounds absolutely incredible. That’s a dissertation certainly borne out of both practice and theory.*

Right. It was certainly an unusual methodology at the time for an IR dissertation! Studying and being a part of movements on the ground and through their gatherings has long been a feminist method and is now more common in feminist IR. But it was also a way to capture how movements were re-imagining security well before feminist IR scholars were publishing on this and developing feminist security studies. .

*Yeah, that’s extraordinary. Would you mind speaking a little bit more about these international conferences that you went to? I mean, they sound like they’re in a number of very different locations that would have been, you know, quite distinct from your experiences in DC and in Canada. Yeah, could you talk a little bit more about them?*

The Nairobi conference was in many ways a peak experience for me and the world’s women prior to the Beijing conference (for which I attended the PrepCom in Vienna as well as the World Social Forum in Copenhagen in the 1990s when I was on sabbatical as a Visiting Professor at the University of Amsterdam). And just after Nairobi, I also participated in a Canadian women’s solidarity trip to Nicaragua during the Contra War there to provide supplies to the revolutionary women’s groups there and to learn more about women’s experiences during the revolution and war. All of these kinds of experiences prepared me for “hearing” the actually very diverse perspectives on and analyses of security women in different geopolitical locales and social locations have as a result of the particular insecurities they experience in them

This was also true of women’s perspectives on security in Canada, as the different regional meetings leading up to the international conference in Halifax underscored, for example, the differences between Indigenous and settler women’s experiences with militarization and violence. At the international conference, it was very clear that there was no single view on peace and security arising from some essentialist notion of “women” and their perspectives nor was there an essentialist and unified approach to “negotiating peace and security” which was a focus of the international conference. What most attendees from the Global South or in marginalized communities needed from the conference was for it to be a solidarity instrument for making demands on states and IGOs to end the various violences they were experiencing. Militarization and particularly nuclearization from Canada’s North to the Pacific Islands, however, emerged as a somewhat shared experience that was particularly undermining of women’s bodies, families, and communities and the subjects around which many conference statements were generated.

**1:00:02**

So in addition to all the historical material that was being produced at the time on women’s peace movements that I brought to bear on this case, I was also able to apply a poststructural feminist analysis to critique essentialist expectations about women and their perspectives on and practices around peace and security. There was already scholarship that was problematizing women’s association with peace as natural peacemakers and I further problematized the concept of “true security” that was in the international conference title, although there was vast agreement that militarized security produced nothing but insecurity. At the same time, as I look back, the idea of the conference process regarding women negotiating peace and security certainly contained the seeds of what later were the efforts of women’s peace NGOs to organize around what eventually became UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which calls for women at the peace negotiating tables.

**1:04:56**

*That sounds like an amazing moment to have been part of, to have been participating in those conferences. Now seems like a good time to ask a question that I was interested in. You’ve mentioned this term already many times and this is the question of feminism. In light of the comments you’ve just made about the different visons of feminism and what that might mean in practice versus in theory depending on your location in the world, would you mind commenting or reflecting a bit about what that term means to you?*

Well, in an interview of me conducted by E-International Relations a year or two ago on the subject of my work and International Women’s Day, I reflected that I have lived through the generation of many types or phases of feminism. Thus, to me, feminism is never static, always shifting. I have also written some about this with Marysia Zalewski, who has helped me to to think about feminist theory as “unbound”--never settling on one particular representation of it but rather seeing its permutations and reinventions over time both theoretically and in terms of practice and that we can always draw from its various wells.

Such an understanding also contributes to resistance to post-feminism and claims about the undoing and death of feminism. Zalewski and I argue that feminism is not like the female body to which it has been attached. It need not decay. It is always capable of reinvention and its referents can change. Are you still there?

**1:09:48**

Certain kinds of feminism can become hegemonic, but I think there’s always insights that stand the test of time as well as morph. So I could not give a single definition of feminism other than to see it as a source of transformative thinking and action--a process by which thinkers and activists mobilise to remake the world.

*I think that’s a really, really cool way of putting it and it certainly seems reflective of the experience that you were describing in terms of arriving at your dissertation topic and methodology; this juxtaposition of the feminist writing that you’re reading at the same time as the new IR courses that you’re experiencing and the activism that you’re taking part in as well.*

*Can I ask, when it came time to submit your dissertation or defend, what were the reactions of your committee to your project? … I mean, this project must have been incredibly different to anything that they’d received before.*

Right! Although neither Nick Onuf as my chair nor Gary Weaver also on my committee from intercultural communication within SIS had a background in feminism, they were open to what I was doing. I also added an external member to the committee, a Canadian professor aware of the case study with some feminist credentials. Spike Peterson, who had heard about my work from Nick Onuf, also attended my defence. And just before it I helped another woman in a later cohort with her flat tire in the parking lot of SIS. That didn’t much rattle me and it went well. This too was the beginning of my long friendship and collaborations with Spike.

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**1:14:50**

Because I completed my dissertation in absentia, I was outside of connecting with my own and later cohorts at SIS and was not participating in ISA. However, as I was completing it, I was contacted by Ann Tickner, who was an assistant professor at Holy Cross at the time. She had learned somehow about what I was doing and was seeking information and solidarity as she was embarking on her work on gender and IR. My dissertation critiqued Waltz while she focused on Morgenthau at the time. I had finished my dissertation prior to the publication of Cynthia Enloe’s *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, but I met her (and other emergent feminist IR scholars) soon after when I started going back to ISA conferences once I accepted a tenure track political science position at SUNY Potsdam in Northern New York prior to my dissertation defence. Spike and I had begun our collaborations in the first year of my new job and hers at the University of Arizona, and presented a paper together at ISA on “Sex and the Sovereign State.” Although I was not part of the conference she co-organized at the University of Southern California on gender and IR around that time, we met soon after in California at a friend’s house to begin drafting that paper and what eventually became our first co-authored article on the “Radical Future of Realism: Feminist Subversions of IR Theory” (1991). Prior to that publication, we both participated in the 1990 Ford Foundation-funded Wellesley Conference on gender and IR that Ann Tickner and Craig Murphy organized and resulted in the book *Gendered States* (1992) that Spike edited and to which I contributed a chapter.

*Fantastic, that’s really interesting. And you mentioned that, during this time, you went on the job market and got a job in northern New York. Could you speak a bit about that experience?*

I had met a member of the Political Science department at SUNY Potsdam at a Consortium of Peace Research and Development (COPRED) conference who encouraged me to apply for their assistant professor position at that liberal arts institution. I also met women’s peace historian Berenice Carroll there, who was an inspiration for my work. One of my older sisters had recently died in a plane crash, so I was not thinking much about going on the market, only finishing my dissertation that I dedicated to her, but this seemed serendipitous as my maternal ancestors had actually been major settlers of the town. My grandmother studied at the Crane School of Music there, which became part of SUNY Potsdam, and my grandfather went to Clarkson University there before transferring to Dartmouth and then returning to work for his family’s paper company there where at least five generations of that side of my family are buried—I had even been there before as a child for my grandmother’s funeral. There is even a Sisson Hall on the SUNY Potsdam campus made possible by one of my ancestors while several former Sisson family homes have become SUNY Potsdam and Clarkson fraternity houses. Given this almost eerie symmetry, I applied for and got the position. I subsequently chaired that department, changing its name to the Politics Department, and created and directed a Women’s Studies program and led a Women’s Caucus there. As a critical political theory-oriented department, I experienced much support there for my feminist scholarly and teaching work and received a college presidential research award for the book *Global Gender Issues* (1993) that Spike and I co-authored. It was also in this period that I was part of the formation of the Feminist Theory and Gender Studies Section of ISA, which I chaired in the early 1990s.

**1:19:59**

Being in Potsdam allowed my mother to reconnect with some remaining members of her extended family in Potsdam and at the Sisson family cottage on the St. Lawrence River. But when my father became ill back in Ohio during my sabbatical at the University of Amsterdam as a visiting scholar for the Department of International Relations and Public Law and a research associate for the new Research Centre or International Political Economy there, invited by my colleague Marianne Marchand with whom I co-organized an international conference that resulted in the first edition of our co-edited book *Gender and Global Restructuring* (2000), I looked to return to Ohio to help my parents. I took a tenured political science position at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio to direct and further develop Women’s Studies there (creating a major, graduate certificate, and graduate concentration) and be nearest to my parents.

**1:24:53**

After my father’s death and my mother’s move to a wonderful retirement community, I was able to pursue and accept a tenured position in Women’s Studies at the University of Cincinnati (UC) to direct its then Center for Women’s Studies, established in 1974, that offered an MA, a joint MA/JD degree in Women’s Studies and Law, and a graduate certificate. Oddly, of course, this was also a return to the city of my birth (a city that my father’s ancestors originally settled) and my first day on the job was 9/11. But despite this financial shock, I completed a capital campaign for an endowed chair and scholarships and parlayed the centre into a department, adding more faculty lines with emphases on transnational feminism and queer studies, joint appointments, and affiliates and additionally offering an undergraduate major, minor, and certificate.

After eight years of heading Women’s Studies, during which I transnationalised the curriculum and won a federal grant to create exchanges and institutes with Canadian and Mexican gender studies programs that culminated in my co-edited book *Feminist (Im)Mobilities in North America* (2013), I took a sabbatical to complete the second edition of *Gender and Global Restructuring* (2011)—now going into a third edition--and the third edition of *Global Gender Issues* (2010)—which has gone into a fifth edition I solely authored under the title *Global Gender Politics* (2019). A couple of years after returning to direct the Women’s Studies graduate program, I served as the interim director of the UC Taft Research Center, a highly endowed public humanities centre begun in the 19th century by the Taft family. It funds programming and visiting scholars and disperses grants to faculty and students in the humanities and social sciences for research, travel, and events.

As I was finding myself more re-engaged with feminist IR work through collaborations with Marysia Zalewski and assuming an associate editor role with the *International* *Feminist Journal of Politics* for which I had served on the editorial board since its founding after many years of being most involved with the National Women’s Studies Association as an administrator and leader in that field, I gravitated back to Political Science, changing my professorial appointment to that department at UC which had recently hired more feminists. This has enabled me to create with my new colleagues a Feminist Comparative and International Politics doctoral concentration and a Gender and Multicultural Politics undergraduate concentration in Political Science to attract more feminists to the field. Thus, it is somewhat like coming full circle and taking care of some unfinished business.

**1:30:21**

*That sounds phenomenal. Can I ask … obviously, you’ve been involved and founded women’s studies institutes and programmes across a number of different universities over the course of your career and now in introducing feminist lenses to political science. Would you mind talking a little bit about the kinds of students that have been attracted to these subjects over the years? Does this vary from institution to institution, do you think?*

Somewhat. I would say. My students at Potsdam were undergrads, but some were fairly sophisticated theoretical thinkers who went on to Master’s or doctoral programmes in Women’s Studies (now more often called Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies). I taught feminist political theory, for example, and I probably had some of my best students in that course and have since heard from several former Potsdam students, including most recently a male student who now holds a major administrative position at neighbouring Xavier University in Cincinnati, that that course or my colloquium on the Politics of War and Peace, which had significant feminist content as did all my courses, changed their lives by thinking hard about gender and social justice. One of my students won a major national award and national news coverage for spearheading the SAVE SUNY (from budget cuts) campaign in the mid-1990s. I accompanied her as her mentor to receive the award in Washington, DC.

*That’s fantastic.*

At Wright State, I created a gender studies concentration in the Masters of Humanities program that attracted some very bright students and strong theses.

One of my recent political science doctoral students at UC, who just received her doctorate and is beginning a tenure track job in Texas, completed the Women’s Studies graduate certificate I created at Wright State (but well after I had left the institution) when pursuing her MA degree there. That was when she began her research programme on maternalist women’s peace movements in the Global South, which culminated in her doctoral dissertation on political motherhood-inspired peace and justice movements in Argentina and Sri Lanka. I served on her committee and taught her feminist IR and feminist methodologies at UC, but indirectly helped set her on her path by creating that certificate so many years ago.

*Yeah, that’s a wonderful legacy.*

**1:34:58**

I currently serve on political science dissertation committees for entirely international students—from Turkey, Nepal, and Italy, for example. Most of these have completed the Feminist Comparative and International Politics doctoral concentration and thus are focused on feminist topics. Another of my past doctoral students from Palestine, who completed her MA in Women’s Studies at UC when I was still in that department and served on her MA committee, went on to do the doctorate in Political Science at UC at my recommendation. I subsequently served on her dissertation committee and she was the first to complete the feminist politics doctoral concentration, and has since gone onto a tenure track job in Massachusetts to continue her work on Islamist women’s political organizing in the Middle East and North African region. I have also published on feminist topics with my former doctoral students and helped them publish in the *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, most recently in a special issue I guest-edited arising from the journal conference I held at UC a few years ago on “Decolonizing Feminist World Politics” when I was an associate editor of that journal.

Many of my Women’s Studies MA and MA/JD students have gone on to doctoral programs, especially in gender studies, but also in geography, sociology, and the like, and have become part of the professoriate. Others have become public interest lawyers or work for local, national, or international NGOs or in the teaching profession. One of my current doctoral students is also completing a joint PhD/JD in political science and law. One impact of the MA/JD in women’s studies and law created back in the early 1990s at UC was the development of a strong feminist and critical race faculty cohort in the UC law school which created the Race, Gender, and Social Justice centre there that also complements the human rights institute there, enabling joint degree feminist, critical race, and human rights-oriented students to have consonance between their studies in Arts & Sciences departments and in Law.

*That’s wonderful. That sounds incredibly important work. Can I ask if, during the development of these programmes at the various institutions, you encountered resistance at any point?*

**1:40:00**

Surprisingly little resistance in my case. I think I was just always in the right moment and in the slipstreams of those moments when change could occur and appeared welcome. Although I am of the generation of many firsts for women in academe, it was also when we were coming in larger numbers, creating some level of critical mass (even though still underrepresented) and coalescing on our campuses (often through women’s studies programs that cut across disciplines) and/or in our fields to make more feminist demands. This was the case as not just more women, but feminists entered IR and found each other, typically at conferences, as happened with Ann Tickner, Cynthia Enloe, Spike Peterson, Christine Sylvester, Jindy Pettman, Sandy Whitworth, myself, and many others. There were also pretty concerted, collective efforts to institutionalize change as universities became more reliant on women’s labour, giving us some leverage. For example, the Bryn Mawr Summer Institute for Women in Higher Education Administration, which I was a part of in 2000, had been grooming women for years to develop feminist leadership in academe, while feminist sections and women’s caucuses were springing up in professional associations across many disciplines, albeit later in IR.

Some IR presses and journals, too, to the degree that they had feminist or more critical representatives or editorial boards, were becoming more receptive to the feminism in the air as perhaps the next new thing. Spike’s and my first book was solicited by Westview Press—we didn’t have to shop it around. The mainstream IR journals were not open at the time, but those in feminist IR, as has been the case for feminists elsewhere, simply made our own spaces if others weren’t available for our organizing, pedagogies, gatherings, and publishing. Given I had taken a more women’s studies route, in parallel or in toto in terms of my jobs, and held chair/director/head positions in liberal arts as well as research institutions in which I was a decisionmaker geared to opening things up, not closing them down, I had more relative freedom and solidarity to promote feminist knowledge than many of my counterparts in recalcitrant contexts where women rarely held leadership positions and feminist perspectives remained on the margins.

**1:45:00**

But as much as (US) academe was responding to an influx of women (and to a much lesser degree people of colour) upon which it has become increasingly dependent (in increasingly exploitative ways as tenure track positions decline) and the demands they, most often as feminists, were making by championing such things as diversity, affirmative action, and international awareness and supporting, albeit to varying degrees and never sufficiently, women’s, ethnic, and international studies departments and programs, this period was also marked by the rise of budget cuts, particularly at public universities, as higher learning became neoliberalised. As a department administrator, I watched this happen in iterations at my successive institutions and had to deal with those increasing strictures each time, creatively making do with less institutional support and of course engaging in significant fundraising when I ran women’s studies at UC. Fortunately, for the most part I have worked in institutions with collective bargaining for faculty, and have been active in all those faculty unions. I also served as the chair of the American Association of University Professors Committee on the Status of Women in the Academic Professions for several years and recently won its Georgina M. Smith Award for my union, scholarly, campus, and professional association work in advancing academic women over the course of my career. This is in addition to the Eminent Feminist IR Scholar Award I received from the Feminist Theory and Gender Studies Section of ISA and the International Political Economy Mentor Award I received from the Society for Women in International Political Economy several years earlier. Such feminist community support over the years has kept me going in the midst of declining conditions in academe that constitute the real barriers to a progressive, and specifically feminist, future for academe. And of, course, the COVID-19 crisis coupled with right-wing backlash are further reducing resources and, of course, community for making such a future.

*Yeah, I mean that sounds incredibly challenging and it has become something that is a huge part of scholarly identity. The other side of our research is the administrative and funding struggle.*

Yes, of course, it is no accident as more women and more people of colour enter the academy as professors, administrators, and students that resources have plummeted. But this is also grist for the scholarly mill in a wider sense. All of my books and many of my articles have been tracking neoliberalism in the wider world and its gendered, classed, racialized, and sexualized nature on a global scale. It is also no accident that as IGOs and many states have acceded to arguments and data that gender inequality and violence are central to reduced economic development, increased armed conflicts, and poor leadership, their “solutions” continue be both under-resourced and privatizing while not going much beyond some “adding some women and stirring.” Thus, we are also seeing retreats from women’s rights as a result of the shift to the far right in a number of countries around the globe, while the pandemic is revealing how women are bearing the brunt as health and other care workers, in the most precarious employment and the most subject to increased domestic violence, and in terms of opportunistic rollbacks in reproductive rights, in part as a result of lack of investments in the care economy under neoliberalism.

**1:50:19**

*Yeah, absolutely. I think it’s really determinative and that leads me to another question where we’re interested in which is - and it’s a buzzword that comes up a lot in discussions around workplace and workplace dynamics - which is this question of, I guess, work/life balance. You mentioned, earlier in the interview, your move to Alberta was prompted by your husband’s career trajectory … he got a job there, for example. I wonder if you might be willing to reflect on how, you know, academic culture around work/life balance has changed or affected you personally over the course of your career.*

I am of the generation of women in the US that could choose not to have children and I made that choice as both a personal and political matter.

**1:55:02**

For those of us who made that choice or were at points in our lives or careers where our children were grown, there was more time for our feminist activism on our campuses and in our fields. But that too has been enormously time consuming even though rewarding. My husband, as a feminist, has supported me as I took on more and more, engaging in the lion’s share of cooking, cleaning, and other life maintenance and following me to my various academic jobs. While I was motivated to take on much because of my feminism as opposed to merely ticking tenure and promotion boxes, it is certainly true that women had to do more to tick those boxes. Today, as work and production expectations are speeded up in the digital age with less resources that are further declining due to the pandemic, research shows academic women with children (or other major caretaking responsibilities for elders, which I experienced somewhat) are falling way behind in their scholarship. Accommodations won, often through union contracts, like stopping the tenure clock and parental leave, are likely to be insufficient to stop this bleeding for some time.

Women and people of colour, too, continue to be held to higher standards in student evaluations, which themselves have been shown to be highly problematic for measuring good teaching. Many men, too, are now feeling the impacts of austerity as academic labour is increasingly casualized. For those of us, and particularly women, in secure labor (e.g., tenured full professors), the work does not slow down as there are always more service demands to shore up institutions and it is escalating as we cope with COVID work-arounds while also better responding to racial injustice built into our institutions and the larger world. So I would say my work/life balance remains highly imbalanced, although I recognize my relative privilege compared to so many other workers outside, but also inside, academe. And while I have gained sustenance from my feminist scholarship, pedagogy, and organizing and have been individually lucky to have personal support in my homelife, whole structures must change for just and liveable workplaces (and homeplaces).

**2:00:32**

*I couldn’t agree more. I think it’s a really difficult question and I think, as you say, it’s not something that can change on an individual basis.*

Right.

*And on that note and especially for someone like you who has always married activism and emancipatory sort of politics with your scholarship, and who is a later career scholar, do you have a vision of what the next few years and what retirement might look like for you? Is there a model that … of a woman scholar or a scholar in general that you would like to follow or is it a question of working that out as you go?*

I have increasing numbers of colleagues who have retired and many are still active in different ways in their scholarship, professional associations, and sometimes even teaching. This is the benefit of working in academe as you can continue these activities even as you let go of the day-to-day institutional demands.

I am fortunate in that I have qualified for my full pension and am at the point that each year now I can choose whether to retire or not. There are still things I want to finish, such as mentoring my graduate students through their dissertations, completing my terms of office as an ISA Vice President and on the ISA Status of Women Committee, and completing two more books. In addition to the third edition of *Gender and Global Restructuring*, I am working on a book on nuclear colonialism—the practice of siting nuclear power and weapons production and waste on Indigenous land—and its gendered dimensions. I began researching this during a Fulbright at York University in Toronto as a result of being a part of resistance movements to stop nuclear waste dumps from being sited near my cottage on the shores of Lake Huron and on Saugeen Ojibway Nation territory. Ironically, this has brought me back to feminist critiques of nuclearism and anti-nuclear and Indigenous movements in Canada arising from my activism—coming full circle in my scholarship. .

**2:04:58**

My husband and I also plan to return to Canada to live part or full-time upon my retirement, and depending on the results of the 2020 US presidential election, that could be either sooner or later. I do have a fantasy of writing fiction, possibly a murder mystery as I do love that genre, post-retirement, but will continue to write regardless.

The one good thing about the digital age is that I can be anywhere and do whatever research, writing, or even teaching I choose. I don’t have any illusions about life expectancy as I have lost family members young and old, and the world and the planet are in real trouble, but I hope I will have some time to follow whatever my bliss becomes and to continue in my own way to make the world somehow better.

Again, academics have at least the luxury of not ending what they do. Our interests, commitments, and work continue, but just continue differently.

*I think that’s a really lovely way of putting it. That brings me to the end of my questions but I wanted to ask if you had any questions that you wanted me to ask that I didn’t … that you’d like to cover in this interview.*

First, it’s an honour to be included in this project, but I wasn’t quite expecting so many questions about my personal life, back to my childhood, leading me to fumble around some in reconstructing that. This now makes sense as women’s histories tend to always be more intimate whereas men’s stories are full of their public life abstracted from their personal lives. More intimate story-telling also better traces what formative experiences bring women in particular to thinking about the international and in different ways. And, of course, for feminists, but what is also a truism, is that the personal is always political. But I am also wondering if my storyline is similar or different from your other interviewees and how.

*I think that’s a really good question and I think what I’ve found is that, obviously, everyone has very different trajectories in terms of the personal forces that are shaping their choices but I think in many ways there are a lot of intersections. I think of the women I’ve interviewed, and these have been in the US, in Canada and the UK … a lot of the same names as influences pop up, for example.*

*I think what’s really struck me and which I didn’t necessarily expect was, you know, the extent to which all the women I’ve interviewed have really come from very different subject areas, … interdisciplinarity has been at the heart of their research questions and that’s been really, really impressive … absolutely. Because you don’t tend to think about … I mean, you read these wonderful innovative articles but getting to hear about the, sort of, processes and readings that led people to these innovations is amazing…*

**2:09:58**

*Each of the interviewees have spoken about quite different experiences of how their gender has affected their work. Some have been much more marginalised on account of their gender than you have and some of them experienced quite horrible cases of harassment which is obviously awful.*

I imagine women older than I you have interviewed have had the worst experiences with harassment and struggling to be heard, although this continues everywhere. Perhaps I was luckier to come of age during the “second wave” of feminism and to be more insulated from the worst in mostly relatively friendly departments and spending much of my career in women’s studies environments that I led. I also felt less of a need to win the approval of male colleagues or the discipline of IR, which would likely be more important for women who are doing non-feminist scholarship in political science and IR, who you may have also interviewed, but also needful for women to get jobs in those fields and advance in them at top tier institutions where they may be among only a handful of women who are more targeted for disapproval. The approval and support of feminist colleagues inside and outside IR was far more important to me and have led more to my advancement.

Interdisciplinarity, too, worked in my favour as the time in which I was coming of age as a scholar was bending towards that. I was never interested in canons, but rather what I could do with ideas from many different contexts. And my early activist history led me to use those ideas for furthering peace, equity, and social justice on an international scale. We’re never isolated from the times in which we live and that has huge impacts on us.

**2:15:06**

I also was able to spend my entire career doing feminist teaching, scholarship, and service as I entered when those spaces could be made and I could make them with others, whether in institutions or (inter)disciplinary contexts.

*Absolutely. And I think too the extent to which disciplinary change takes root at different times and in different institutions. I think that makes a difference as well to people’s experiences.*

Right. And even with all the feminist interventions in most disciplines by now, US students within political science and IR are still uneasy about breaking out of orthodoxies, in part because they are awash in dominant narratives that international politics is about states personified by their (male) leaders vying for power, an image still reproduced in US classrooms. A student recently said to me, ‘I’m never quite sure if I’m up to critical work.’ There is no question that it harder to go against and think outside dominant narratives, but it can be done if one opens oneself to post-positivist, interdisciplinary sources.

Women’s Studies students are far better at interdisciplinarity and organizing their scholarship towards not questionable objectivity, but rather social change. In the US, they have been less oriented to international or transnational topics, but that has also changed a lot with so many more international students in the field and many more transnational feminist sources that are also drawing upon feminist IR.

*Yeah, absolutely and I think that’s a really important part of teaching is trying to open up perspectives and getting them to ask questions that they wouldn’t normally be asking.*

Exactly. And what I do tell my graduate students is that it is important to choose thesis and dissertation topics that they really care about because they will have to live with them. It can be so much more rewarding to try to make a difference in the lives of people in your work than to “solve” some minute or heavily bounded problem in the “the discipline.”

*I think that’s really important.*

Again, I thank you and happy to send my CV or anything else you might need for this project.

*Thank you, I really appreciate that.*

**2:20:46**

End of interview

Transcribed by Stephen Flinn (April, 2020)