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**Oral History Project
Interview Transcript**

**Joan Scott
Interviewed by Linda Arntzenius
May 14, 2015**

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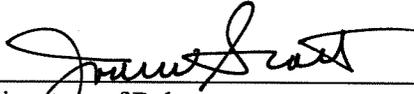
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Linda Arntzenius: I'll just say for the sake of the recording that I'm here at the Institute for Advanced Study to record an interview with Professor Joan Scott about her over 30-year association with the Institute. As I've said, the purpose of the project is to capture for the sake of future historians your reminiscences of the Institute and your association with it.

But before we get to the "passion and madness"¹ of the Institute as you know it, perhaps we might start a little earlier with something of your childhood—who your parents were, where you grew up, and how it was that you came to your subject.

Joan Scott: Well, my parents were high school history teachers in New York City but I don't think I became a historian because of them. I grew up in Brooklyn in New York, went to public high school, went to Brandeis University afterwards and from Brandeis to the University of Wisconsin where I got my Ph.D.

I think I became a historian because of the inspiring influence of teachers at Brandeis, particularly a historian named Frank Manuel², who, I later discovered when I wrote something about this, had inspired any number of other people to become historians as well.

Linda Arntzenius: Interesting. So you had good teachers.

Joan Scott: Yes, and I think it was the way they taught history which was never the way history was taught in high school that was exciting. It was critical and asked questions rather than had you memorize facts.

Linda Arntzenius: Yes—I think a lot of us went through that sort of history, which involved learning lots of dates.

Joan Scott: Dates, yes, and I have to say, I'm still bad at dates. It was intellectual history that these guys taught, and it was eye opening that you could read texts and come to understand how people thought about things, see the different, conflicting ways that different people thought at any particular moment in history.

¹ The reference here is to a remark in Prof. Scott's introduction to her 2011 book *The Fantasy of Feminist History*, which Professor Scott points out has nothing to do with the Institute for Advanced Study.

² Frank Edward Manuel (1910-2003) a respected European intellectual historian of the twentieth century. He taught in the history and psychology departments at Brandeis from 1949 to 1965, then took a position at New York University, before returning to Brandeis as Alfred and Viola Hart University Professor in 1977.

Linda Arntzenius: What were you reading as a young child? Do you remember?

Joan Scott: Everything. I used to go to the Eastern Parkway branch of the New York Public Library at least once a week and get out everything I could—biographies, fairytales—it ranged the entire gamut. I remember going back there years later and thinking how small the room was and how low the chairs were, because to me [as a child], it was this huge place.

We didn't buy books in those days. We just went to the library. Watching now the horrible underfunding of the branch libraries in New York City, is just so distressing, because it really made the difference for me in the kinds of worlds I could explore. I remember also being allowed by the librarians to go into the grown up section when I was tall enough.

There were librarians who kind of kept an eye on kids, and even though it was a big community that used that library, I think they knew the children who could be encouraged and urged to move on to other kinds of readings.

Linda Arntzenius: Was your childhood ambition to be a scholar, to do research?

Joan Scott: No. I don't think I had an ambition. My childhood ambition was to please my parents, to do well in school—I was the oldest, and I think that matters. I didn't really know what I wanted to do, including when I got to college. I thought maybe I'd be a teacher, maybe I'd be a psychologist—I just didn't really know.

Whereas now, of course, students, at least graduate students, *interview* the faculty to see whether or not they want to come to a particular place. It was when I was a senior in college and I'd majored in history and I'd done an honors thesis in history, that my advisor said to me in the context of the early '60s and the sense that more faculty were going to be needed in the universities of the country: "You know, you should apply for this fellowship"—the Woodrow Wilson Foundation was now giving a quarter of their fellowships to women.

I didn't get the fellowship, but he said, "You know, you should be going to graduate school," which had never occurred to me. I had never really thought of that before, and it had never been part of the world in which I lived. Everybody had gone to college, my parents were the first generation in their families to go to college, but going to graduate school was outside of the realm.

I went to the University of Wisconsin because I had decided I really wanted to go to a graduate school where I didn't know anybody. Brandeis was very small and ingrown-- it had maybe 1,200 students, maybe even fewer—and I wanted a bigger place, a different world.

So I applied to Wisconsin and I applied to Berkeley, and I got into both, because again, this was this moment of a huge expansion where everyone was getting in everywhere. I decided to go to Wisconsin partly, I think, because it was closer to New York, and I was a little nervous about leaving my family, and partly because I thought I would know no one there. And I got there, and the first days I was there I met people I had gone to camp with. *[Laughs]* It was really quite surprising.

Linda Arntzenius: What made you choose Wisconsin?

Joan Scott: I don't even know.

Linda Arntzenius: *[Laughs]*

Joan Scott: It was big. It was a place I'd never been.

Linda Arntzenius: It was halfway across the country —

Joan Scott: It was halfway. And the same thing happened with [my subject]— I knew I wanted to major in history, I applied to graduate school in history, but again, unlike now, I had no idea what *kind* of history. When you entered the history department at the University of Wisconsin, it was the old—Germanic system. You were assigned to a seminar for life. You didn't move from seminar to seminar. The chair of the department was named Merrill Jensen³ who was an American historian who wrote about Jefferson. He was known for being dubious about women's participation in seminars, because it would somehow inhibit the male camaraderie that he thought was part of graduate training.

Linda Arntzenius: Interesting.

Joan Scott: So he interviewed me, and he said, "What kind of history do you want to do?" I said, "History." He said, "What languages do you have?" I said, "French," because I'd been doing research in

³ Merrill Monroe Jensen's (1905-1980) was a professor of history at the University of Washington (1935–1944), where he was editor of *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison (1944–1976). His work focused on the United States Constitution.

French. He said, “French is good.” And that’s how I became a Modern French historian. He put me in a seminar with modern French historians, and that was the beginning.

Linda Arntzenius: And that was it! And that was how you came to your *Glassworkers of Carmaux*.

Joan Scott: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Interesting. Yes. So we’re going to jump a little bit ahead to the Institute because you came as a Member—let’s see—1978 to 1979. How did that come about?

Joan Scott: How did that come about? I was at the University of North Carolina at that point. My husband was at North Carolina State. We had gone there from Chicago when he didn’t get tenure at the University of Chicago. Bill Sewell was a long term Member in the School of Social Science here, and he was a French historian like me, and we had known each other for a long time, and I was looking for fellowships, and both of us—Don and I were both looking for ways to have a year off, and I must have gotten in touch with Bill.

I don’t actually remember, but I know I applied here, and it may have been that there was a seminar or themed seminar that was being run. I was a labor historian, gender historian, social historian, and they may have been organizing a theme around that, and in those days, you got invited as well as applied. And Bill may well have gotten in touch with me and said, “How about this?” Don applied at the same time to the Davis Center at Princeton, and he got into the Davis Center, and so we ended up coming. It was just a fantastic year.

Linda Arntzenius: Did you have a family at that time?

Joan Scott: Yes. I had two kids.

Linda Arntzenius: So they came as well?

Joan Scott: They came as well, and they had the most wonderful year of their existence at the year-long summer camp that is the Institute housing. They made friends with whom they are still close friends—especially Bill Sewell’s kids. Their younger daughter is still a very close friend of my daughter.

Linda Arntzenius: So you have a daughter and a son.

Joan Scott: I have a son and a daughter. Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: So they had some connection with the Institute when they were young.

Joan Scott: Yes, they loved it, and Lizzie, my daughter, when I came back as a professor in 1985, was at Princeton High School. Tony was already at college, but she went to Princeton High School.

Linda Arntzenius: How long did she go to the high school?

Joan Scott: Three years. I think she came in the ninth grade and she graduated from Princeton High School.

Linda Arntzenius: Let's go to the point at which you are invited to join the faculty in 1985. What considerations went into your decision.

Joan Scott: Well, I was at Brown at that point. I was the founding director of the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women at Brown.

I had been there for four and a half years—I loved it. In fact, teaching at Brown was the best teaching I had ever done in my life, but I was overwhelmed with administrative work as well as with trying to do my own work because we were fundraising, we were doing endless projects, and one day I got a call from Clifford Geertz, whom I had invited to come and lecture in the Pembroke Center months before. It was Amy Jackson, his secretary who called. And when I got this phone call, I thought, “Damn it, he’s going to accept this invitation to give these lectures, but I’ve already invited other people to come and do the lectures, so what am I going to tell him? What am I going to do?” So he gets on the phone—

Linda Arntzenius: Had you not expected him to accept?

Joan Scott: The lectures?—I’d written to him months before and he’d just never answered. So I thought, “Oh my goodness, he’s now decided to accept this invitation after I’ve already given the money away to somebody.” He got on the phone, and he said, “My colleagues and I wonder if you’d like to join us on the faculty at the Institute for Advanced Study.” I have to say I almost died of a heart attack, because when you’re a Member here, the fantasy of your life is that you could stay here forever.

So I said—I don't know what I said. It was probably incoherent. He said, "You can do anything you want. You can come and meet us, come give a lecture, you can do this, you can do that"—and we finally agreed I would meet them in New York. He, Albert [Hirschman], Michael [Walzer], and I met in New York at an Italian restaurant in Greenwich Village, and we talked and talked and basically it seemed like a non-negotiable, irresistible offer. I thought about it a lot, but it was the offer of a lifetime. I think now things are different when we try to recruit faculty.

Linda Arntzenius: Really?

Joan Scott: Before, the salary was just off the charts; that's not the case anymore. The issue of partners is also a question in recruiting. Don didn't have a job when we first came, but quickly got something at the New School. Even the issue of time [is not as important as it once was to potential faculty]. The greatest benefit of being here is you can do anything you want with your time. For some people at top-level universities who are university professors, there's minimal teaching and a great deal of time.

Linda Arntzenius: So the changes have come about in the universities rather than—

Joan Scott: Yes, rather than here [at IAS].

Linda Arntzenius: I understand. Interesting. So when you were asked it was obviously not something you could turn down. You were being invited by Geertz and Walzer and Hirschman.

Joan Scott: People I admired enormously.

Linda Arntzenius: It puzzled me as to why you were appointed in Social Science rather than in Historical Studies.

Joan Scott: Because I don't do what they do in Historical Studies. First of all, very few of them are modern historians. They do more empiricist kind of work than I do. I was interested in theoretical questions and certainly in modern history and social history and understanding histories of social change—how it happened, why it happened—rather than the kind of specific details of a particular time or group.

Linda Arntzenius: So it's more philosophy of history.

Joan Scott: Yes—theories and philosophies of history. Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Did it bother you that there were no women on the faculty here?

Joan Scott: It bothered me, but there was not much to do about it. There were all sorts of odd things that happened. When I first came, Homer Thompson, who was in the School of Historical Studies, came up to me one day and he said, "I knew your predecessor." I thought, "That's really odd." I had no idea what he was talking about. I said, "Who?" And he said, "Hetty Goldman." As if, you know, there was somehow a woman's [slot]. Here I was almost 50 years later. She was appointed in 1936. I was appointed in 1985.

So almost 50 years later, I was the second woman ever to be appointed at the Institute. I think I had already learned that dealing with that issue was something one did diplomatically, sometimes humorously, and being in this position and working on questions about gender gave me terrific ability to support work by women—by feminists, in whatever fields they were in. So it brought to the place a perspective and a set of issues that substantively had not been considered before.

So yes, it was odd. There were times—I remember once there was a photograph that Arnold Newman, had been commissioned to do of the faculty. *[Laughs]* He had us all stand--well, there were two things about it. The first was that he had clearly used members of the staff to do the lighting and the positions and so forth, and we all ended up in what is now the Dilworth Room in these positions and the light was all wrong, because he had used largely black staff, and we [the faculty] were all white.

It was fascinating. The guys on the staff who had been our stand-ins were looking on and when Newman said, "The light readings are all wrong," there were some smiles from them. The second thing was that while he was taking these pictures, he kept saying, "Gentlemen, look up. Gentlemen, turn to the left. Gentlemen, stand up." And after a while, I thought, "Well, that's not bad, you know. I've become an honorary gentleman. Why not?" *[Laughs]*

So there were things like that. There was another thing that happened. I won't mention the name of the person, but my office was on the second floor, and there was a gender seminar that we had the first or second year I was here. The big one was in '87-'88 when the theme was gender, but this was before that. One of the women in the group had brought her daughter who was six or seven years old and very independent and very sweet, and she was in my office. We were in the second floor seminar room in the West Building, and she made no noise. She was just quietly

playing, but a professor in the School of Historical Studies noticed her, and then next day I got a letter that said, “Dear Professor Scott, you may not know that the rules of the Institute for Advanced Study are that there will be no children allowed in any of the buildings, *especially* in faculty offices.” And I thought, this is really a sign of enormous anxiety on the part of this guy as to what it would mean to bring women here. Again, probably not the entire faculty, but certainly some of them had this view.

Linda Arntzenius: Yes, and do you think your subject—your own particular subject may have had something to do with that, too. Interesting. I know that Louise Lamphere had brought about the Pembroke Center —

Joan Scott: Well, no. She brought about the conditions for women faculty being a presence at Brown.

Linda Arntzenius: Right. I was thinking about the class action suit and the road, I guess, which led toward the founding of the Pembroke Center.

Joan Scott: Right.

Linda Arntzenius: Did it ever cross your mind that something like that would be appropriate here?

Joan Scott: Oh no. *[Laughs]*

Linda Arntzenius: Could you say why not?

Joan Scott: Because the myth of this place is that excellence, merit, is the only way anything can be judged. You may know that Patricia Crone was *ferocious* on this topic. She wrote to the director and her colleagues when she retired that by no means should a woman be appointed to replace her—

Linda Arntzenius: Unless?

Joan Scott: Well, I don’t think there was even an “unless” in there. But I think this place rests on the notion that all that matters is excellence. It’s an unacknowledged bias, and an unexamined bias, and as for bringing a lawsuit—I couldn’t bring a lawsuit since I was absolutely treated as an equal.

My pay was equal, unlike most senior women on faculties in American universities. My treatment was flawless. There was nothing—no one had objected to my appointment on any grounds, nonetheless that I was a woman. So there was really no way to do

that. It seems to me the way you address the kinds of prejudices that you find here are: over time; diplomatically; and, in the case of women in the mathematics program, with money. And in the case now of a diversity committee that Danielle Allen [pushed for]. That's the way you address it.

Linda Arntzenius: Interesting.

Joan Scott: And then it only happens slowly, but the best I could do was to use my position to make it possible for a kind of scholarship—feminist, but not only feminist—feminist and a certain kind of critical theoretical scholarship to be practiced and legitimized on the part of faculty all over the country because they got to spend some time here. That's the great thing about this place.

I said this once to one of the scientists when we were in the midst of a big fight about appointing Bruno Latour⁴. I said to one of the scientists, "Well, you know, it's coming here that defines you as a genius." And he was just horrified, because [to him] being a genius is what brought you here.

Linda Arntzenius: Right.

Joan Scott: And that was what they hated about Latour's work. He argued that there was always a politics about who got to be identified as the outstanding figure in science—who got to be seen as the breakthrough person. My sense was that this was a place that could have—and it has had—a positive influence in the fields of the social sciences along some of the lines that I was interested in pursuing.

Linda Arntzenius: It's a very diverse department, because you have from the beginning an anthropologist, you have a political theorist, you have an economist —

Joan Scott: A political economist, yes.

Linda Arntzenius: And you. It's like no other department at least in its beginnings, perhaps things have changed a little bit?

Joan Scott: Well no—none of these places, none of these schools, covers all of the field. It's just too small an institution for that, and our school is the smallest, although there was a kind of representative sample:

⁴ French philosopher, anthropologist and sociologist of science, Bruno Latour (1947-) is known for studies in science and technology.

anthropology, political theory, as you said, and political philosophy, political economy, and then social history—cultural, social history was my field.

I think if you look, not everything is covered certainly in the School of Historical Studies or even in the other schools. It's not every kind of math or every possible physics that are covered in those schools. It's certain things that have taken off or that have seemed to be important. What united our school and still should, I think, is this preoccupation with critical thinking about the kind of work that's done in our fields. So we're interested in examining the premises of the kinds of history that are done, not just doing history, even though we do that, too.

Linda Arntzenius: Now Harry Woolf was the director when you became a Member—

Joan Scott: Yes. And he was still the director when I was appointed.

Linda Arntzenius: I'll ask you to comment on directors and their administrations, but perhaps we can do that a bit later on. When you came to take up your faculty position, where did you live?

Joan Scott: We bought a house on Lambert Drive, behind the Boychoir School.

Linda Arntzenius: Do you still live there?

Joan Scott: No. My husband and I split up, and after we did that, I moved to Princeton Walk, which is outside of Kingston.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, ok. And that's where you are now.

Joan Scott: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, that's nice. A lot of people live much closer to the campus.

Joan Scott: I did not want to live on the plantation.

Linda Arntzenius: Tell me about that.

Joan Scott: Well—there are people for whom this is a total community, and I felt that although they were people I became friends with, I didn't want to spend my life under the gaze of and in relationship to this very tight, small community.

- Linda Arntzenius:* And so you drive in and out, and do you still have ties to New York?
- Joan Scott:* Absolutely. My kids are in New York, my very close friends are in New York. And in fact with this retirement, I now have affiliation at the Graduate Center at CUNY where I'll probably supervise some graduate students and go to lots of seminars and ask lots of questions.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Sounds good.
- Joan Scott:* Yes.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Over the years, people have commented on the Institute as having sort of a monastic setting. Was that something that was a lure for you?
- Joan Scott:* I think it was less the monastic setting than time—that your time was your own and you could do with it what you wanted. And it took getting used to for me. I was used to being busy all the time and running around and giving talks, and the absolutely wonderful thing here is when you had a deadline or you had something you absolutely had to do, you'd just do it. You'd just close your door, tell your secretary (in those days) to answer the phone. And so it was the issue of time freed up to do research and writing that was most attractive.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Right. So it wasn't a sort of choice between a life of scholarship and a life of scholarship and, perhaps, activism?
- Joan Scott:* That was some of it, because especially the administrative stuff at Brown and the Pembroke Center was eating me up, and fundraising as well. So coming here meant scholarship as the primary thing, but activism I always did, and particularly in—I don't remember when--in the late '90s, when I joined Committee A of the AAUP—the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee of the American Association of University Professors, and that has been a place where I've done a lot of activism related to questions of academic freedom and academic governance.
- 28:20
- Linda Arntzenius:* Looking back, do you think that your work developed here in ways in which it might not have done elsewhere?
- Joan Scott:* Absolutely. That's the other great thing about it.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Could you say something about that, please.

Joan Scott: Yes. You have the freedom to do anything you want. It took me, again, a while to take advantage of that. But I think the kind of pursuit of more theoretical questions led me to realize that I didn't have to just go to the archives and produce books of history, although I did that, but that I could think about big questions with input from [other faculty members] in ways that just had never occurred to me.

So Geertz's reflections not only on anthropology but on what counts as evidence, how you think about what memory is, how you think about common sense—all of that made a huge impression, and those were the sorts of things we talked about in seminars.

Those were the kinds of questions we asked each other about the work that we were doing. And Albert and Michael were similar, but particularly Albert Hirschman who was doing very idiosyncratic things in relation to economics that his fellow economists were appalled at and that we all found intriguing because you could think about how people thought about economic forces—about what the motivations for people were. Were you driven always by maximizing your self interest, or was something else going on? That just became the stuff of the conversations that we all had.

Linda Arntzenius: When you came here, the field you were working in was described as the *emerging* field of critical history. It's not still an emerging field, or is it?

Joan Scott: It's not really a field. Those of us who do it call it a field, but yes, when I came here, it wasn't mentioned in that way--it was social history, cultural history, in my case, women's history—gender history. I think it's only in the last few years that people have begun to call themselves critical historians. The journal that I'm one of the founders of, we call it *History of the Present: A Journal of Critical History*. Bill Sewell, my old friend, is the founder of a journal that's just come out, I think there are one or two issues, at the University of Chicago, it's called *Critical History*.

So it's only the last couple of years, and it's an attempt I think by those of us who were doing philosophical and critical work to *call* what we were doing something different from social history--and to call it that in the face of the repudiation by mainstream historians of anything but empirical or materialist history.

Linda Arntzenius: Philosophy has its day, it seems to me, coming into more and more subjects as time progresses. Tell me the importance of Members in your work.

Joan Scott: The Members are great. The hardest job that we have is picking them, because as you know, we get as many as 200 or 300 applications and you have to pick—in our day and the early days, it was 15 or 16, now it's 20 or 21. Partly it depends on the number of apartments available, on the stipend money we have.

In our school Members have to come for the full academic year. It was Albert Hirschman who designed the stipend as a monthly stipend up to 10 months for X-thousand dollars/month. In our school, people have to stay beyond the end of the term. Term ends as early as April and everyone goes away, but our people have to stay until June, because Albert's notion was that with such a small school and with so few members, creating a community was what we wanted to do, and in order to create a community, you had to have people staying put. If they were here for two months or three months, which happens in Historical Studies, it wouldn't make sense.

So most of our Members come for the entire academic year, for ten months. Having them live here means that there's life after work. In the old days, dancing parties and Halloween costume parties. Actually there are some pictures here of parties that we've had where people dressed up as what they were working on, which was really fabulous.

Linda Arntzenius: [Laughs] That's wonderful.

Joan Scott: The inventiveness was just really wonderful. And we always said that the more Italians we had, the more dancing parties we had. It depends on who comes. But the Members really are the heart of the whole thing, we have a theme seminar that meets every other week, and people are working around a set of common problems. But there are also little seminars that form, so in any year, there might be three or four people who suddenly discover they have something in common, people who never knew each other, or worked together before and who end up not only meeting in the seminar, but writing articles together or a book. A couple of years ago, these two guys, an Italian anthropologist and an Israeli political scientist, met and they ended up writing a book that's coming out very soon. Members are the intellectual heart of the place.

The faculty are certainly important because they give a certain emphasis and direction to what goes on, but it's the Members who really are terrific. I always say that this is a very odd place from the point of view of Members because there's a small faculty who are your colleagues but not always your closest friends. Members come, and some of them, in the intense activity of the academic year you spend together, become really close friends and then they're gone at the end of the year, and it's always very hard to lose them. I find in the fall of the next year, somebody in the office of somebody I was really close to thinking, "What's this new person doing here?"

But in fact, the internet and email has made possible networks of connections that we had before, that are much stronger now than ever. So you can stay in touch with people you've started a conversation with and the conversation continues, Skyping or emailing.

The other side of that, though, is that when somebody comes who is a really difficult personality, and we have certainly had those, you think to yourself, "This is horrible," and then you think, "Well, he'll be gone in June or she'll be gone in June, I never have to talk to her again." So it's the double sidedness of it, on the one hand the ability to form really deep and lasting friendships, but proximity is lost, and the other side, you only have to put up with difficult people for a brief period of time.

Linda Arntzenius: I've heard it said the standards are so high here, that that can be energizing for people, but it can also—

Joan Scott: Freeze them—paralyze them?

Linda Arntzenius: Yes.

Joan Scott: It happens.

Linda Arntzenius: Does that happen?

Joan Scott: It certainly happens. Yes, that happens. There was one Member who spent every weekend in New York because she couldn't bear the smallness of Princeton, and she said, "Joan, there's nowhere to walk, there's nothing to do here." She had friends in New York. After a while she settled down. When she actually got working on her book, she ended up not leaving the place so she could finish her book.

It's usually the younger scholars who have that kind of reaction who are just suddenly paralyzed by the thought that they are supposed to produce something excellent and wonderful. It doesn't happen often, but every couple of years there are some people you have to spend a lot of time counseling, reading their work, telling them it's really not bad at all, and they're as good as the next person.

Linda Arntzenius: I'm getting the impression that by the time you came, all of the "trouble in paradise" that had gone on prior to the founding of the School of Social Science had died down. Would you say that was correct?

Joan Scott: It had died down, but it didn't go away, because many of the players were still here. Clifford Geertz went to his death not talking to certain people in the School of Historical Studies or of Math, which were the two schools that opposed the founding of the School of Social Science. It took a long time for the personnel to have so turned over that all memory was gone, but then came the Latour fight.

Linda Arntzenius: Well, tell me a little bit about that, because you were here for that, right?

Joan Scott: Yes. It was the economics appointment that we had tried to fill after Albert retired. I was hired after Albert retired, but not to fill [that academic vacancy]—there was always the promise of a fourth appointment. Fundraising for it was difficult. I think we decided after several attempts, offering the economics position to Amartya Sen, among others, and being turned down, we decided to look elsewhere. Science studies was—as it still is—an amazingly interesting and productive field.

I think we had money for it from the Luce Foundation, and the idea was to test the ground and see what would happen. We settled on Bruno Latour as the obvious candidate—this big guy who was doing work in science studies that was really interesting. And he gave a talk. That was our big mistake.

Probably if he hadn't given a talk, it would have been all right. He gave one of these, as Cliff called it, "French" talks, in which he kind of off the cuff said all kinds of things about science and the history of science and where theories stood in the chain of things. A couple of the—not even the Members or the professors in the science side of the campus came, but their wives. And one wife in particular was horribly offended by what she thought was the

demeaning of the field of science, and she went back to her spouse and to that faculty.

Linda Arntzenius: Do you think they [the faculty spouses] were sent?

Joan Scott: I don't know. I have no idea. But they were there, and then the faculty started to read him. This was in the midst of the science wars. It was '90/'91. Murph Goldberger—not the most adept of our former directors--was filling a place basically for three years after he retired from Caltech to fill Harry Woolf's position.

When the scientists started to complain and question Latour's knowledge of science--it was a huge thing—he [Goldberger] recruited letters from Nobel Prize winners. I have to say, as their obituaries appear in the New York Times, I think, "Another one hits the dust." I mean these were really vicious letters saying he [Latour] was basically no good and wasn't worthy of being here.

Michael and I talked to some of the people who opposed the appointment, and the argument was, "Well, people who study science aren't scientists." And we said, "Well, we're not appointing a scientist. Sociologists of religion aren't necessarily religious. They study religion. We're studying science." Well, one person said it would be fine if you brought a historian of science who chronicled the activities of genius. This is a direct quote—"the activities of genius as they pried secrets out of nature." But somebody who is analyzing, doing sociology—treating us [scientists] the way an ethnographer would treat a primitive tribe, that is not acceptable.

Linda Arntzenius: Interesting.

Joan Scott: It was a brutal battle, and we lost. When we knew it wasn't going to go through, Bruno withdrew his candidacy.

Linda Arntzenius: Would Morton White not have been on your side?

Joan Scott: No. Morton White was one of the prime opponents of the School of Social Science to begin with. He disingenuously, to say the least, in his memoir, doesn't at all talk about the role he played in the Bellah affair.

So he wouldn't have done anything for our School, whatever he thought of the particular appointment. In any case, that dispute, which was vicious and violent, led--when Phillip Griffiths was appointed--to revisions of the rules of governance here. I don't

know if you know about this, but the rules of governance in this institution are barn doors closing after the horses have fled. So every rule of governance, or many of the big rules of governance are ways of addressing a problem that caused a crisis—after the fact.

Phillip Griffiths, to his credit, came in and figured out, one, how to address contentious issues among the faculty, usually by meeting with each school separately, convincing them of something, and then bringing them all together with the consensus already arrived at. Or if there was one outlier, as there was on the question of age of retirement here, forcing the one outlier to be confronted with the fact that he was in the minority, or his School was in the minority, and he had to cave in. But he also developed the appointments procedures.

It used to be that to make an appointment, you sent the director a nomination, letters were recruited, the materials were in his office, and if nothing happened for six weeks, two months—whatever the time period—the appointment would go through. If there were no objections, the appointment would go through. Phillip introduced the ad hoc committee process, which was a Harvard institution, in which you would follow similar procedures, that is, the School would nominate, they would get letters of recommendation, but then a committee would be convened consisting of three outsiders in the field of the person, and a [faculty] member of each of the non-appointing schools.

So there were six, and the idea was the outsiders would educate the non-appointing Schools about what this person represented and why it was a good thing, and they could be questioned and talk back and forth, and that is now the procedure that is in effect, and it's a terrific procedure. But that is the direct result of the Latour affair, as we call it.

Linda Arntzenius: Yes. When was the Piet Hut affair?

Joan Scott: The Piet Hut affair came after that, and that was all about the power of John Bahcall.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, I've not heard it expressed that way before.

Joan Scott: Well, Piet Hut was hired when I was. I have not done the research on this, but this is what I've gathered about the affair.

47:40

Linda Arntzenius: You were here at the time, so you witnessed it.

Joan Scott:

Piet Hut was hired the year I was hired in 1985, apparently over the objections of some in the School of Math, and with the strong support of John Bahcall, who was the alpha male of alpha males in the School of Natural Science.

Over the years, Piet developed other kinds of interests—Buddhism, philosophy of science—and apparently, again, this was the claim of Bahcall, did less of the kind of astronomy he was hired to do. That may or may not be the case, I really don't know. And the School of Natural Science, and I think Bahcall particularly, began to feel like he was somehow [hurting their image], so they tried to fire him, or they tried to encourage him to leave.

There were a whole set of things which are probably documented in some online place where Piet did document them. Phillip got him to sign a letter that he [Piet] then repudiated, and then there were on the part of the trustees—many of them business people who have no idea of what academic freedom or academic governance is about—those who felt they could win a judgment in court and asked for a declaratory judgment in advance (whether or not they would try to move to fire him) of whether that withdrawal of his signature was legal.

I have to say, I regret enormously my role in that, which was to do nothing, because I think that there was a profound violation of academic governance if not academic freedom on the part of the director and the trustees, and of John Bahcall. I mean John just wanted to get rid of him at all costs. Philip was afraid of John, and of John's power. There were other instances in which one witnessed this, and they acted in an indefensible way. I regret enormously that I didn't come in with my AAUP hat and do something, but I think I was so baffled by what was going on, and so taken aback, that reacting just wasn't something that I could do.

There was a faculty meeting with the trustees, and they were adamantly talking about getting rid of this guy, and I remember saying, "Well, what does it say in the rules of governance about removing a faculty member?" There was nothing. Now there is. And now there is because I did, in fact, give the director the Red Book, which is the AAUP set of guidelines for appropriate procedures. In the end, Piet prevailed by using the internet to rally enormous amounts of support, and by just sheer stubbornness, which is a good thing in those kinds of situations, and he was appointed professor-at-large, and he got a small amount of money

to bring people in, and I'm sure he'll be here until he retires, as he should be.

And so that was a really bad moment, and unlike the objections to Latour, and even to Bellah in 1971, this was a far more personalized fight. It was about the power of a School and particularly one faculty member in a School, who had once used his power to bring this guy, and now was using it to try to get rid of him. That was quite astonishing to see. The power imbalance at the Institute is always there — the science and math side of things being much more powerful, carrying much heavier weight than [the other two Schools].

Linda Arntzenius: That's historical, I guess.

Joan Scott: Yes, that's historical. But it's also the fact that every director has been a scientist, and plays to that side. It's also a result of the fact that a lot more money can be raised for the basic research that goes on over there than in other schools. But in my experience here, the only director who has not favored the science side has been Peter Goddard, who really understood the role and position of the different schools and who is by far the most astute and fair-minded director of any we've ever had.

Linda Arntzenius: We'll revisit that. I appreciate your response on Piet Hut. I wonder did you find the experience with this and the Latour incident, demoralizing in any way?

Joan Scott: Oh God, yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Did you ever think of leaving the Institute?

Joan Scott: I don't think I ever thought of leaving, partly because as one of my friends said, "This is a golden cage." It's very hard to fly away. It's too comfortable, too easy, too . . . and also, it's worth fighting for the values that one wants to have represented in this place. You lose sometimes. I mean, but in the case of Robert Bellah, they lost, but the School prevailed.

And in the case of Latour, we lost and we never did science studies, but new procedures were developed to make sure things like that couldn't happen again. And the year after the Latour fiasco, we had a science studies year and a couple years later we had another science studies year, funded by various foundations, and so you can find other ways to pursue the subject matter. And that, again, as I said before, *matters* in terms of legitimizing whole

bodies of scholarship that continue on outside of the Institute. The IAS plays a crucial role in legitimizing scholars and their work.

For example, there's a guy we have this year who was initially denied tenure at the University of South Florida, having written a brilliant book, and on the grounds, the dean said, of the fact that--her letter was something like, "Despite the indisputable excellence of your scholarship, you have two articles too few for what we count as tenure at the University of South Florida."

This is a university that is aspiring to become a Research One University in this country and is applying the metrics of measurement substituting for the quality of the work. And this is happening all over the world, not only in this country. In this guy's case, there was organized a campaign. Forty letters were sent to the Provost, including from his publisher, who said, "I publish many books by young scholars who have just revised their Ph.D., this guy took 3 years to produce a book that a mature scholar wouldn't be capable of producing after 15 years."

And then—and it was still all up in the air—we invited him to be a visitor here, and the minute the university heard that he was coming here, he got a letter from the president saying, "Congratulations, this is a first—or second—for the University of South Florida. We're so proud of you." And I said to him when that happened, "There's no way her lawyers let her do that if you're not going to get tenure. There's just no way." And he did get tenure in the end.

This is an extreme example of the power this place has to confer a certain legitimacy on the scholarly work of the Members who come here, and it's not something one would easily give up. I was in a position to further the careers of a lot of people. Having had this kind of discouraging and demoralizing experience (the Latour fiasco) along the way didn't mean that one wanted to give it up.

Linda Arntzenius: Right.

Joan Scott: I don't know if you know about the latest thing that's been going on.

Linda Arntzenius: No. *[Laughs]* Do tell. Oh dear.

Joan Scott: Once again, these last weeks, this School has faced—crisis may be too strong a word, but it certainly felt like a crisis while we were facing it. Two of the professors of our school are leaving. That

leaves one professor, and I'm retired and not replaced. So that leaves Didier Fassin as the sole professor. The myth used to be that you had to have three professors to have a School, that's not true, but you do have to have three professors to nominate somebody for a faculty position. So the question is how can the sole remaining professor regenerate the school?

This professor, who is like Clifford Geertz--brilliant, capable of institutional development in an extraordinary way--but how can he do it? A special advisory committee was appointed to come up with the mechanism by which new appointments would be made. The committee is headed by Harold Shapiro, former president of Princeton, consists of people who knew the School, former Members in some cases, people who'd served on ad hoc advisory committees for us. I think there were six or seven of them. Their report will come in next week.

Linda Arntzenius: Ok. Gosh.

Joan Scott: In the meantime, I have to think hard about saying this for the record, but I will. In the meantime, we had to replace our academic trustee, whose term had ended.

Linda Arntzenius: Ok.

Joan Scott: Each School has an academic trustee whose job it is to advocate for the School with the board of trustees. Before Danielle Allen announced her departure, and while we were still hoping we could accommodate her and make her happy, she suggested that we appoint a woman called Margaret Levi who is the head now of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS) at Stanford.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh yes.

Joan Scott: Margaret Levi, it turns out, is a rabid supporter of rational choice theory, game theory, big data, computer applications in the social sciences—all the things we do not do. I don't know if Danielle knew how aggressive this woman would be, but she arrived for the trustees meeting--we're not sure whether she'd seen the drafts of the report or not, none of us have, or had--and she came in basically with guns blazing. An academic trustee is supposed to be an advocate for the School. Levi was the opposite.

In the trustees meeting, with Didier present, and having not talked to any of us beforehand, she said the School of Social Science was

“backward,” that she’d looked at the Member’s list and she couldn’t recognize a single person on there. I have to say, I have since asked a number of people in various fields of social science if they’ve ever heard of Margaret Levi, and people say, “Who is she? I’ve never heard of her.”

And she did this before the report was in. She denounced everything that was going on, and she said she was proposing a radical transformation of the School; this without having consulted with any of us or talked with any of us. She did talk to Michael and to me, saying what she thought she would be proposing and we argued with her to no avail. She sent Didier her talking points for the board of trustees meeting an hour before she presented them. And she kept saying that her Center was the model for what should be going on.

Linda Arntzenius: Ok.

Joan Scott: You can imagine what kind of effect this had. Some trustees who are ignorant of the kind of social science we do, but who watch *Ted Talks*, or give them themselves, and think that computers everywhere are the future of everything, that big data is the only way to do things, were if not entranced, taken aback by her. And so unfolded a set of days of just incredibly tense and anxious questions about what was going to happen.

Margaret Levi proposed a “radical transformation” without having any idea of the process by which that might happen and did enormous amounts of damage. The question now is how to repair or address that damage. It sets precedence not only for our school, but for any school at the Institute. Having a trustee intervene in that way without any consultation raises the question for all the schools.

What if somebody came in—an academic trustee, or a non-academic trustee for that matter—to the board of trustees and said, “String theory is past. We have too many string theorists at the Institute. Let’s move on,” with no consulting. The point here is that faculty governance is the name of the game, and questions of future direction and emphasis come from the faculty. They can be discussed, they can be debated, but the origin is with the faculty, not with the board of trustees.

So among other things, she was setting a precedent that had every school faculty member worried and the response to us of those

representatives of their faculties was this can't be allowed to happen. So this has been going on for the last couple of weeks.

Linda Arntzenius: Golly.

Joan Scott: The question, I think, and again, this is me—my personal opinion is that Margaret Levi should resign. She has violated her responsibility to represent us [the faculty of the School of Social Science] and to discuss with us what should be going on before going and denouncing us. She presented herself as ignorant of the basic rules of procedure here. She runs a Center—we have now looked into this—of which she was on the board and then chairman of the board before she became its director this year, in which it underwent serious financial problems—it basically spent its endowment and had to be taken over by Stanford. Stanford then fined it for disregarding its own rules of procedure and so on and so forth.

Anecdotally, I've heard from people who have been there in the last year or so who said--one person left after a semester because he just couldn't stand it anymore—that the whole emphasis is on partnerships with business, with teams of people analyzing data and so on and so forth. Levi really doesn't belong at this institution and at this school.

Linda Arntzenius: Did I hear correctly—did you say that Danielle had suggested Margaret as a possible faculty member?

Joan Scott: No. As our academic trustee. And I hope Danielle didn't know how aggressively negative the influence of this woman would be. But I hold Danielle responsible for a terrible recommendation.

Linda Arntzenius: There are a lot of trustees. Is that something you care to comment upon?

Joan Scott: Yes—20. I don't know what to say about that. I think the trustees always need somebody to explain how an academic institution works. The more business-oriented trustees are especially unsympathetic to the ethos of the academy. It was really clear in the Piet Hut case. I remember talking to Michael Bloomberg who thought that tenure was a ridiculous thing. In the business world, if somebody's not working, you fire them, he said.

It was impossible to talk to him about why you would want to protect the way that a scholar would pursue his inquiry, because you know, against all odds, he might turn out to be a genius or to

turn up something new and wonderful. And if you forced him to stay within the bounds of whatever was received wisdom, you would lose this innovative possibility. In any case, what you need is a translator, an interpreter, and various trustees have done that. Vartan Gregorian was magnificent at it.

Peter Goddard himself was magnificent too. I'm not sure that right now there is somebody on the board or in the directorship who is capable of those acts of translation, which makes the situation a more difficult one to think about—

Linda Arntzenius: You're scaring me.

Joan Scott: Well, we were really scared about the School. One of the things that Didier Fassin did that was brilliant was he gave a talk to the board in which he said, "I study the police and prisons"--those are his latest books. "As an ethnographer, I've ridden in police cars for months at a time. I've been in the prisons—there's a lot of big data on rates of recidivism, on this, on this, on this— here are the things that I've learned in the kind of social science I do," which I would say most of us do, or that this School has represented, that gives you insight that you otherwise couldn't get from the metrics.

For example, when the police distrust the government, the judges particularly, and feel the judges will always let somebody off out of respect for for the technicalities of the law. I mean we've all watched enough *Law and Order* episodes, right, to see this happen. The police will say, "We're going to make this stick," or, "We're going to kill this guy to make sure a criminal is off the streets." Didier had all of these amazing examples of how the prison becomes a place where low-level drug offenders turn into hardened jihadists--this is in France where he was doing his research. They don't come in that way. They're not terrorists to begin with.

I think people were really impressed by Didier's demonstration of the concrete ways in which the work that we do in this School feeds into thinking about social policy, about fairness, about structures of equality and inequality—discrimination and how things change and why. Not at the level of correlations you can make among sets of data, but insight you can get from talking to people about what matters to them and on what basis they make decisions.

Linda Arntzenius: This goes back to Flexner's "Usefulness of Useless Knowledge."

Joan Scott: Exactly.

Linda Arntzenius: It's very tongue in cheek, but—

Joan Scott: But it's absolutely right.

Linda Arntzenius: No one would put limits say on funding a creative artist.

Joan Scott: Or, for that matter, a string theorist.

Linda Arntzenius: Why don't they get it?

Joan Scott: There's a wonderful quote I've used a number of times from John Dewey, who says, "Academic freedom is needed more in the social sciences than in any other field." In the sciences you can always argue for the truth of what you've found and the scientific method provides your objectivity. It's not always the case—vaccinations, for example, caused great anxiety--but it usually is. In the social sciences what you're going up against is what people take to be *common sense* understandings of how things have to be.

So when you come in and say things don't have to be this way. We don't have to think about inequality as the failure of inept, irresponsible people at the bottom, and the triumph and deservedness of the guys at the top. We could talk about it as the deck being stacked in ways that make it impossible for people of color to achieve in the same way as white people.

So you're up against things that are taken to be common sense and taken for granted in the ordinary way of doing things. And so, one: they are not treated with as much seriousness as curing cancer, and two, when you come up with a set of explanations or recommendations that are at odds with the way things have always been done, you're likely to be accused of socialism, of not understanding, of radical departure from whatever it is . . .

Linda Arntzenius: And it also could be perhaps that the reasons are complicated. People want—

Joan Scott: Simple reasons. Exactly. Black and white.

Linda Arntzenius: Black and white. Yes.

Joan Scott: I think that's absolutely it as well.

Linda Arntzenius: So that's a sort of man in the street kind of way of looking at it.

- Joan Scott:* Yes. Just tell me why. And our answer is not *why* but *how*. How did this happen? There are a whole variety of things, not a single simple cause.
- Linda Arntzenius:* I hadn't realized that now that you've retired, Didier Fassin is the only one left. Golly. I should have thought about that before I came in.
- Joan Scott:* What would you have done differently? *[Laughs]*
- Linda Arntzenius:* Well I wouldn't have been demoralized by the thought. *[Laughs]*
- Yes. Well. The Institute had its 80th anniversary some years ago now, 2010, and you and Caroline Walker Bynum coordinated a seminar entitled *The Influence of Gender on the Reinterpretation of the Fields of History and Social Science*. Sadly, it was not recorded for posterity. I wondered if you could just say a little bit about that.
- Joan Scott:* I can't even remember it. I think we probably said the obvious things, or I think maybe what we did was each talk about things we had done. So she probably talked about the work she had done in medieval history about saints and [blood and representation of religion], and about Members and the ways in which looking at the experience of women and what women have done historically has changed. The research has not just supplied more information about women, but led one to understand issues of, in her case, theology or biblical interpretation differently.
- In my case, I probably talked about understanding questions of citizenship and the ways in which the issue of sex affects the definition of who counts and who doesn't count as a citizen. I think probably that was the kind of thing we talked about, and we probably also talked about the fact that a greater level of consciousness—and activism on the part of professional women—has led to a greater presence of women in the academy generally, and even at the Institute. Although we're down now to none.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Yes. This is bad.
- Joan Scott:* No one. Sabina Schmidtke in Historical Studies. We're down to one.
- Linda Arntzenius:* And very quickly there was a blip rise to four and now its down to one again. Have you any ideas how this sort of thing can be addressed?

Joan Scott: Well later this afternoon I'm actually meeting with an old friend of mine named Mary Ellen Capek, whom you may know. She used to live in Princeton, and she's a member of the diversity committee. At the last decadal review, and at Danielle and Victoria Bjorklund's urging, the question of diversity at the Institute came up. It not only came up, but was argued for, and so there was a diversity committee created.

Linda Arntzenius: So that's a new committee.

Joan Scott: That's new, and in fact there were three earlier meetings scheduled this year, and each time there was a snowstorm.

Linda Arntzenius: [Laughs]

Joan Scott: And Mary Ellen, whom I am going to meet this afternoon after her meeting, said to me, her brother had predicted a tornado for today just because there was something determined not to let [this happen].

Linda Arntzenius: Yes, a message from above.

Joan Scott: A message, right. No diversity at the Institute for Advanced Study.

Linda Arntzenius: I have a few mundane questions to throw in here. What institute resources have been important to you?

Joan Scott: The library above all. Marcia Tucker and the librarians—we couldn't live without them. In the olden days, it was books they would get for us and articles, and they still do that. Now it's also technology. They are on top of every possible resource, and they teach you how to do it. So I think—and I tell Members when they come that the library—they have found things for me I couldn't find in Paris—French sources I couldn't find in Paris. They're completely selfless, and helpful, and all they care about is making it possible for us to do the kind of work we should be doing.

So that's, I think, the greatest resource. I think the housing is important—not for me anymore—but I think the housing, because it creates a community and a cross-disciplinary community. I had a research assistant who was a historian who married a physicist. She met him, a post doc, but it's not only that. It's that there are networks of connection that happen among people who never otherwise would meet each other, and that is both intellectually and personally just a terrific thing.

Linda Arntzenius: Are you ever concerned that the Institute will grow and lose some of that?

Joan Scott: I don't think it should. I think the Institute should stay the size it is, because it's precisely this size that makes the whole thing manageable. Maybe [an additional] professor here or there, but no new school, I think for as long as possible, this ought to continue doing and permitting people to do the kind of work they do.

Linda Arntzenius: You don't think that now that, as you say, people at senior academic levels in universities have more opportunities for research, that perhaps the Institute has done its job, so to speak?

Joan Scott: No. Not at all, because universities are much more dispersed and complex communities than this one. Even within each school, the ability to intensely concentrate on particular aspects of particular problems that we're interested in talking about couldn't happen in the same way at a university.

In universities, people have other commitments, they're called to do other kinds of things. The combination here of a faculty, which at no other research institute in the country do you have—a faculty that provides a certain kind of leadership and Members coming for a year, is not reproduced anywhere else, and cannot be, I think, reproduced in a bigger, larger setting.

Linda Arntzenius: And you think the environment—I don't mean the pretty trees, but I mean the fact that it's sort of set a little bit apart—do you think that is important?

Joan Scott: It matters. Yes. I think it does. People are forced into each other's company. Obviously you can do things and go to lectures at Princeton, but if you really want to get your work done, the resources and the people here to talk to are just without equal anywhere else.

Maybe it's because I've been here for 30 years and known its pleasures that I think it would be a real mistake to have it be a much larger institution than it is. It's complex as it is, it works really well, why mess with a good thing?

Linda Arntzenius: Let me now turn to the fact that you've been here 30 years, and you've known Harry Woolf, Murph Goldberger, Phillip Griffiths, Peter Goddard, and now Robbert Dijkgraaf, let me ask you

whether you've observed differences between the directors and their administrations, and could comment on those differences.

Joan Scott:

Yes. Well, I think of Harry Woolf as exemplifying the old way that this place worked. It was extremely paternalistic in the best sense. Faculty ran the place. There weren't very many meetings. I think there were two faculty meetings a year. There still are, but there weren't any other committees or other meetings, so things were pretty much, *laissez-faire*. The schools did what they did. There was more or less, often less, input from the director's office in the form of help about fundraising and it just kind of went along, and it was fine. And Harry brought us the dining hall—the chef in the dining hall, and the transformation of the Institute from a middle-of-the-road cafeteria to the best restaurant in Princeton.

Murph Goldberger was a three years interim position, holding a place, extremely biased for science. He really thought that the schools of historical studies and social science were a waste of time and didn't care much about them. And certainly behaved as a director should not in the fight over Latour.

Linda Arntzenius:

He was not even-handed?

Joan Scott:

He was not even-handed at all. He recruited letters from people who would denounce Latour.

Phillip Griffiths was extremely effective administratively. He created an administrative system that still works, not only the ad hoc committee for appointments, but all these little committees, academic affairs, or the advisory committee to the director—the executive officers who meet once a month. There's a computer committee and an art committee. I mean committees galore, which don't meet all that often except for the executive officers and the advisory committee which I think now have been merged into one, but I'm not sure. Maybe even the academic advisory committee that brought to the trustees concrete information from the schools, so you reported about what was going on in your school, even brought in Members to talk about their work and what they were doing and so on and so forth.

Linda Arntzenius:

Did you serve on any of these?

Joan Scott:

All of them—not all of them, probably, I never served on the computer committee, but the library committee—maybe not the art committee, but yes, I've served on most of these committees.

Linda Arntzenius: And been a liaison between your school and the trustees, presumably.

Joan Scott: Yes, well as Executive Officer (we rotated the job each year) you reported to the trustees. Phillip was effective as a fundraiser. That was when we defined the Albert Hirschman chair, I think, and recruited Eric Maskin to become the first Albert Hirschman chair holder. And that was Phillip's idea, the Albert Hirschman chair and how to bring economics back to the Institute, and how to do it in a way that worked. We had tried before and couldn't get anybody. And he was extremely helpful about that. So I think to him we have to grant the structure of a certain kind of administrative coherence that didn't exist before.

Peter Goddard is my ideal. This is a guy who ran a complex institution. Well, so did Phillip, as provost at Duke during the years of cultural wars, he really did know how to handle things extremely well. Peter, I think, had a greater sensitivity to the work of the different schools, and particularly to our side of the campus, which always got short shift, even from a sympathetic director like Phillip.

I mean it was just—you just sometimes had the feeling that these guys didn't get the quality of what was going on in Social Science, and the importance of it. Peter did. He was direct, he was frank, some people thought he was a bit of a micromanager and that he wanted to have his hand in everything, but at a place like this I think you have to have your hand [in everything]. I really do. I think that delegating is dangerous because you have a very small faculty and information networks that take one minute, especially on the internet, but even before, to disseminate. He was (and Helen Goddard was too) an amazing community builder.

All sorts of things happened as a result of Helen's work. And so I was sad when Peter decided to retire two years before the end of his second term, but I can see why. He led a capital campaign of tremendous success that required a huge effort. I'm going to be bad [at remembering] about this, but I think it was the Wolfensohn chair that also came under his aegis, and Didier Fassin got the Wolfensohn chair. But anyway, I felt that you could always go to him and talk about a problem, and get a frank answer—an answer which was not at all trying to please you because he wanted to be your friend, or . . .

Linda Arntzenius: Right.

Joan Scott: Harry Woolf was a different. He was afraid to offend you, and he would sort of put it in the context of a whole set of issues, you know? If I do this, these sorts of things follow, or if I do this, it sets a precedent that we may not want to live with, or if I do this, then I'll have to do this for everybody.

Peter also helped standardize some of the definitions of categories like Member and Visitor which had varied in each school. It has been extremely helpful. The other thing that was really remarkable about Peter was that he understood what faculty governance was. He never mandated things from the top.

In 2008 when we were facing financial crisis and the crash of the stock market, the trustees said that there had to be savings of \$1 million per school. Peter went to each school and he said, "You figure out how you want to do that," and each school came up with a different solution. One school, I think historical studies, postponed faculty appointments. We did something about Members.

It worked. We all saved our \$1 million. No one was angry. This is how universities all over the country should be doing this, not just here. And, as a result, Peter went to the trustees and said, "I need from you \$10 million a year of operating expenses to cover the losses over the next three years," and they gave it to him.

I can imagine another director, none of whom were faced with that situation, imposing across the board cuts here, here, and here. But what Peter did made us all cooperative partners in figuring out how to address a set of problems that we all shared, with solutions that were different, and [we] never had to argue or compete with each other about it, which would have been the case if they said only two appointments over the next five years, and we were all competing for those appointments.

Linda Arntzenius: Indeed. I just interviewed Peter, he did not tell me that.

Joan Scott: Well, he's very modest. He's extremely diffident. He never takes credit or the amount of credit he should take. You know, I have no desire to be something like a university president or the director of an institution, but were I to do that, he would be the guy I would go to to teach me how to do what had to be done.

Linda Arntzenius: Interesting. And how do you see the future with the current director?

- Joan Scott:* I don't know what to say. I think he has yet to prove himself. He has so far not been a very decisive or strong leader when it matters.
- Linda Arntzenius:* I don't know what the position is with biology at present, but do you think that is perhaps where he might prove himself?
- Joan Scott:* I really don't know. I have too little sense of him I think at this point to understand what kind of leadership he's going to exercise.
- Linda Arntzenius:* He does have an artistic background . . .
- Joan Scott:* But he's a scientist and he has no appreciation for the humanities or social science work.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Do you think you'd ever want to be a director?
- Joan Scott:* No. Oh, God no. I mean, first of all, the idea that these scientists would have a non-scientist is bad enough. A woman would be anathema. I can't imagine what it would be like. I mean they would play games, probably, all over—they would be just undermining whoever she would be like crazy.
- Linda Arntzenius:* You became Emeritus in 2014. Has it made any difference?
- Joan Scott:* Well, we're sitting in my office still. When they make some faculty appointments, I will move out of this office into an office in D building. I was supposed to have done that this year, but since there's no reason to do it . . .
- Linda Arntzenius:* That'll be a big change.
- Joan Scott:* That'll be a big change. But I keep saying in the course of this year, which is my first year of retirement, when Albert Hirschman retired, he said to me after he'd retired, "You know, the only thing that's changed is that instead of getting a check from the Institute I now have to write a check to the Institute."
- Linda Arntzenius:* [Laughs]
- Joan Scott:* And I would say that describes my situation as well. Instead of getting my check with my lunch money and mortgage taken out, at the end of every month, I get a bill. That's it. One doesn't feel marginalized in Emeritus status. I can participate in anything I want. There's funding for research and travel. One feels a member of this community, and it's a good thing.

I'd say I've probably worked as hard this year as in any other year, and unfortunately gone to more meetings than I ever wanted to go to.

Linda Arntzenius: I'm getting towards the end of my questions, so they get to be a little more frivolous. I'm wondering if you were ever to look at the Institute as a case study, what would it make a good case study for?

Joan Scott: That's a very good question. I guess I would choose historical sociology rather than ethnography, although maybe you'd need an ethnographer to come along with you, but I think it's a very interesting study in an elite institution committed to the highest values of academic scholarly work.

So it is an island of utopian possibility for doing basic research and thinking outside the box, and doing whatever one wants, and at the same time, it's a very hierarchical institution. Historically at least from a disciplinary point of view, math and physics have always been the superior or more favored schools. But also historically, you could look at changes not only in disciplines but in the relation of disciplines.

Linda Arntzenius: I know you suggest that the balance is still toward the hard sciences, but it seems to me that in more recent times, it's shifted a little bit towards more historical and social sciences.

Joan Scott: Some.

Linda Arntzenius: I'm looking at it as an outsider, as a lay person.

Joan Scott: I think some it has, but more interesting, than the relation of the schools, I think the shift you're talking about, is that there is more cross-disciplinary interest--although probably math is the least interested in what historians do or think. I think it would be interesting too, to look at how emphasis has changed in the sciences. What is it people say? Chemistry was the science of the 19th century, physics of the 20th, and biology of the 21st. So that transformation.

You will have people in physics telling you that some of their best post docs and graduate students are gravitating to biology. Some of the physicists are doing the same. So it's interesting to watch how emphasis shifts or what fields attract the most brilliant and enterprising younger scholars. And it's true in our fields as well.

Some of the divisions in the fields would be interesting to study. For example, the impact of hard, quantitative science on sociology or on political science as opposed to the softer approaches of political theory, political philosophy, social history, cultural sociology.

It would be interesting to look at the themes at the schools, our school at least, you could look at the kinds of people that are hired, the work they do, and you could trace patterns in disciplinary transformation even as those of us who come in have to be certified by our disciplines as exemplifying what they're about. So I think it would be fascinating to actually do that kind of study here.

Linda Arntzenius: It would. I've often thought about that, and what conclusions could be drawn.

Looking back, who are the people that stand out in your recollection of this place—that perhaps have had a major influence on you?

Joan Scott: Well, Clifford Geertz is sort of the larger than life figure in this school. Albert Hirschman, Sarah Hirschman.

Linda Arntzenius: Interesting.

Joan Scott: Sarah Hirschman was a figure in this community and in our School who is probably unparalleled, I would say, in the spouses of all the other faculty members, at least in my experience. I mean obviously my experience is limited in a way. But she was married to this great man, had a life of her own . . .

Linda Arntzenius: Which continues . . .

Joan Scott: Which she continued and continues in the People & Stories⁵ legacy, but she would come and sit at the table and she would engage young scholars. Sarah would say, "I'm rereading Dostoyevsky now in Russian." She was this galvanizing figure, and in the days before Albert was ill, they would invite young people over. There would be dinners at their house, there would be tea, they would come back from Europe with illicit patés and cheeses from Paris. And everybody would come over to their house and have wine and cheese.

⁵ Founded in 1972 by Sarah Hirschman, People & Stories/Gente y Cuentos, is a reading and discussion program in English and Spanish serving adults and young adults who have had limited opportunities to encounter literature.

As a couple they were wonderful, but she was a very dynamic presence here, and an argument for the kind of community this is, which is that the families and the spouses are part of the community. I would say for me those were the influences certainly on my work and thinking. To a lesser extent, Bill Sewell when he was here. Quentin Skinner. He was also a long term visitor here, he and Bill were here; he for three, Bill for five years after the Bellah affair in the '70s to preserve the school. Over the years, lots of Members who've come through, but it's hard to single all of them out.

Linda Arntzenius: It's difficult given what you said about the recent problems with the school having one faculty member, but I was going to ask you what developments you'd like to see in the school in the future?

Joan Scott: Well, I think they should have somebody who does history of some kind, because I think my presence has been useful in that way, reminding people that the things they want to analyze in the present have a history. They need to remember that.

Linda Arntzenius: Is that something that people are likely to forget?

Joan Scott: Yes, of course. If you're doing contemporary work.

Linda Arntzenius: And yet your journal is *History of the Present*.

Joan Scott: The French philosopher Michel Foucault talked about what he did as "history of the present." It's not contemporary history, but critical history. That is, taking what are taken to be common sense notions now, and pointing out that they have a history—that secularism didn't always mean the same thing [the anti-Muslim thing that it means now] in the 19th century. Gender or the sex roles of women and men have not always been the same as they are now. So all this brain science that says women are more caring and cooperative, men are more aggressive, comes from somewhere. It's not a fact of science or a fact of biology.

There are people who are studying—I don't know—patterns of inequality in contemporary America who may or may not remember that slavery is part of the story that they need to tell. I think they need some kind of historian, and there is brilliant work being done by so-called global historians. Two of the people who just won the Bancroft Prize in history do that kind of work.

One of the Bancroft Prizes is a book called *Cotton* by Sven Beckert. It's the history of cotton, but the history of cotton as the history of the Atlantic slave trade, of the global world, of now, Bangladesh, of sweatshops.

So somebody who is thinking the boundaries of global history and trying to theorize and define it, I think, would be a really important person to have.

Linda Arntzenius: Would the School of Historical Studies not be the place for that?

Joan Scott: They don't do that kind of thing. They don't do modern history for the most part. The only modern historian is Yve-Alain Bois, their art historian. Our School needs somebody who could speak to the issues of how social change happens, to how one theorizes . . .

We need some form of political theory, absolutely. Maybe law, maybe somebody who is thinking about the future of democracy in a world where between Fox News and the authoritarian states all over the place and when the number of people who vote declines, at least in the United States every year, it seems there are big issues for the future of democracy that are at stake. And legal issues, issues of law and the rule of law and international law.

Somebody in sociology, I would think, who does things like the sociology of religion. Cliff used to do that. Somebody who is thinking what all of this religious stuff means. We have an economics chair, but it might not be a game-theoretical economist, it might be somebody who does sociology of economics or economic history or thinks about economics and its relations to some of these other sorts of questions.

I think there's a lot out there. Science studies is still a field. Again, not as the kind of apostles of bad brain science who want to attribute everything to the brain rather than do what the more sophisticated brain scientists talk about, which is how environments impinge on those neural pathways that they are charting. So those kinds of issues, but done from a critical perspective.

Linda Arntzenius: Is it really true that the person who is retiring has no say in who comes after them?

Joan Scott: In principle. Well, how you interpret "no say" is the question. Certainly in the schools of natural science and math, input and advice is welcome and solicited, as it was in our school up until

when Danielle Allen ran the Linder search and when she decided that she had to literally interpret the rule that we don't appoint our successors. That's where that comes from. Of course we don't appoint our successors, but consultation is different from dictation!

Linda Arntzenius: Right.

Joan Scott: In the School of Historical Studies, that was the case. It used to be a Germanic succession, and it didn't always result in the best appointments.

Linda Arntzenius: But it seems to me if you don't take into account the person who is most knowledgeable about the field—you would be missing a resource.

Joan Scott: I absolutely agree, but I think the *literal* interpretation of the notion that you don't appoint your own successor has been more or less in evidence. It's been firmer in historical studies where the precedent always was the appoint your best student or your most flattering student as your successor.

It certainly was never the case in this School, although we consulted—we wanted to know what Cliff or Michael or Albert thought. And in no way did any of those people [appoint their successor]. But as I say, Danielle chose to interpret it literally, and so cut me out of any conversations about the Linder chair—the chair that I had. When I talked to people in math and science about this, they were surprised, because they regularly consult.

So as everything else in this place, it varies from school to school, and in some cases, from the personality of the people who are doing it.

Linda Arntzenius: Well, I'm getting to my end, and I have to ask you about your awards. You have received many awards and many honorary doctorates including one from Princeton University very recently. I was shocked to see how recent that was.

Joan Scott: Recent. Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Which has given you most pleasure, would you say?

Joan Scott: It's really hard to say. Which has given me most pleasure? I think it wasn't an honorary doctorate, it was the Hans Sigrist Prize.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, yes. 1999. University of Bern.

- Joan Scott:* I was the first non-scientist, I think, to receive it. Yes, and it was organized by women's studies and feminist theory scholars in Europe, and it was just an enormously gratifying thing, because it was a recognition of not only the importance of my work, but that they could use me to sort of break through—open up the possibility for future awards.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Joan the battering ram.
- Joan Scott:* Sort of.
[Laughter]
- Linda Arntzenius:* Sorry. I couldn't resist.
- Joan Scott:* But I don't mind being used in that way to make point about what is and isn't legitimate scholarship. Actually the most gratifying was the University of Wisconsin from where I got my Ph.D. So coming home to that university when Biddy Martin, who was then the chancellor, who was an old friend and somebody I worked with for years, was presiding and gave me—hooded me—I think that was the most gratifying because it was being recognized by the place that had started me out in life as it were, and coming home.
- That was just enormously gratifying and it wasn't the year of women or anything like that. I mean at Harvard when I got my honorary degree, it was right after Larry Summers resigned, and it was the year of diversity in a way that might not otherwise [have been]. And it was fine. I was very proud to get that, but Wisconsin was the one where I felt really deeply, deeply satisfied.
- Linda Arntzenius:* And your papers are going to go to Brown.
- Joan Scott:* Yes. Brown has a feminist theory archive, so that was a very easy choice.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Alright. My last question is this: is there a question that you expected me to ask that I haven't asked?
- Joan Scott:* You've been really good. You're good at this.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Well I'm always worried that I missed something or there's some elephant in the room that I'm not aware of.
- Joan Scott:* I don't think so. You asked it in some ways, but it's something I didn't think of saying which is that being part of this School over

the 30 years that I've been part of it, and working with colleagues like Cliff and Albert when they were alive and Michael Walzer still, you develop a kind of camaraderie in collegiality that is very rare and very special, and this group of them, and now it would expand to include Didier and for the brief times the others who have been here, the nature of the collegiality has been, in my experience, exceptional.

In history departments there were tensions and a different way of operating, but there's something about the way we operated [in the School of Social Science], recognizing and respecting each other's differences so that they never became contentious and divisive. And coming together and working together when the moment's required it in moments of crisis or not-so-crisis—how are we going to find money to support this program and how will we save the School—it's been really rare and remarkable for me, I think.

And I would say that there are profound differences I've had about particular issues with many of my colleagues, but the nature of the collegiality that is somehow the ethos of this School has been just extraordinary and exceptional, and I wouldn't want to end an interview about this without remarking on that. And that was the case whether I was the only woman or not.

Linda Arntzenius: Was there ever a case, an instance, where you were at odds with everyone else in the department?

Joan Scott: Yes, often with Danielle Allen about procedural issues—she was very rigid. And there are also some funny anecdotes: Caroline Bynum and I were talking one year about a joint theme that the two schools might do together—she and I might do together, and it was when she was working on her book on blood. And she said, “Well, we could do a theme on blood. You could do AIDS and the AIDS Crisis and the ways in which blood is thought of as polluting,” and she was interested in all those pictures of Jesus and the sacredness of his blood.

Linda Arntzenius: Tossing ideas around, yes.

Joan Scott: We were meeting in my office, and Cliff and Michael—Albert wasn't here--maybe Eric was, I don't remember. We were talking about a theme for a seminar the following year. What I remember was, I said this to them, and Cliff said, “We're not having any of your menstrual blood in this school.”

Linda Arntzenius: [Laughs]

Joan Scott: And I thought—I mean I loved the guy, but I thought, “Ok, you know, this is telling me much more than his objection to this particular issue.” And I just dropped it and I said to Carolyn, we can’t do it. There were moments like that, but it was never worth a fight. I wasn’t attached enough to the idea to care, and what it revealed about his unconscious anxieties was just more than I wanted to deal with. We have disagreed on how to do things, but it’s never [been divisive]. Maybe it’s the size of the place, but it’s also—and this is the other part of selecting faculty—the way in which personality has mattered in the choice of faculty.

Linda Arntzenius: Thank you so much.

Joan Scott: Thank you.

Linda Arntzenius: What a pleasure.
[End of Audio]