

**GLOBAL FEMINISMS
COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES OF
WOMEN'S ACTIVISM AND SCHOLARSHIP**

SITE: NEW ZEALAND

**Transcript of Sandra Coney
Interviewer: Nicky Newton**

**Location: Auckland, New Zealand
Date: February 8, 2023**

**University of Michigan
Institute for Research on Women and Gender
1136 Lane Hall Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1290
Tel: (734) 764-9537
E-mail: um.gfp@umich.edu
Website: <http://www.umich.edu/~glbfem>**

© Regents of the University of Michigan, 2023

Nicky Newton is an Associate Professor of Psychology, who was born and raised in Christchurch, Aotearoa/New Zealand. Nicky trained and performed as a classical flute player in New Zealand, Australia, and Austria. She played with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra in the 1990s, before a hand injury curtailed her career. After moving to the United States, Nicky gained a PhD in psychology from the University of Michigan (2011). She has held research and teaching positions at Youngstown State University, Northwestern University, University of Michigan, and Wilfrid Laurier University (Canada). Most recently, she moved back to Wellington, Aotearoa/New Zealand, and is currently a Research Fellow with the Health, Work, and Retirement Study based at Massey University. Nicky uses quantitative and qualitative approaches to research relationships between personality, social roles, gender, life transitions, and well-being across the latter half of adulthood. Recent projects include a multi-faceted study of older Canadian women's lives, an examination of stressful events and well-being among mid-to-later life women in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and a case study of the life of an Ann Arbor-based community activist. She recently co-edited, with Jamila Bookwala, *Reflections from Pioneering Women in Psychology* (2022), a volume of 26 essays from trailblazing women in the field.

Sandra Coney is a feminist, women's health advocate, writer, environmentalist, and local body politician. She was one of the founders of Broadstreet feminist magazine and the advocacy group Women's Health Action. In 1987, with Phillida Bunkle, she wrote the Metro magazine article 'An Unfortunate Experiment at National Women's' that led to the Cervical Cancer Inquiry (also known as the Cartwright Inquiry) in 1987-88 and, subsequently, to significant reforms in health consumers' rights. She wrote a regular column of political and social comment for New Zealand newspaper the Sunday-Times between 1986 and 2002, and has won both the Qantas Senior Feature Writers' Award and the Jubilee Prize for Investigative Journalism. Sandra has written or edited over 18 books, including the major Suffrage Centennial publication *Standing in the Sunshine: A History of New Zealand Women Since They Won the Vote* (1993), and *Stroppy Sheilas and Gutsy Girls: New Zealand Women of Dash and Daring* (2004). Since 2001 she has been a councillor and board member in Auckland local government, serving on the Waitemata District Health Board for 10 years, and currently on the Waitakere Ranges Local Board; her particular interest is centered on parks and the environment.

Keywords: Community Activism, Gender and Health, and Intersectionality.

Nicky Newton: I'm here with Sandra Coney. Before we start, Sandra, I want to just make sure that if you can confirm with a verbal yes, that you're okay to be interviewed—you agree to be interviewed this afternoon.

Sandra Coney: Yes, I agree to be interviewed this afternoon for the project.

NN: Okay, thanks. So, the first group of questions in the background about your life. And I get, you know, through where you are today, how you got to that place, and what that journey was like for you. So, things like, what your central commitments were, what your career looks like, and any significant lifetime achievements for you professionally. And I'll remind you if we don't always touch on those things.

SC: So, you want me to sort of go into that a little bit. Yeah.

NN: Yeah, yeah. Your career arc, if you like?

SC: I don't really consider that I've had a career, because I'm one of those women of my era that is quite well educated. But I got married at 17, and so they was sort of no question of a career, and along the way I—I went back to university [clears throat] with children and got involved in starting the first University creche¹ in Auckland,² and through that encountered feminism. And so really, I got very involved in feminist activity. So, I never had what you'd call a career. I've written books. I've been a journalist. Umm—there's lots of different ways that I've earned a living, but there's no kind of single thread that you could look at in my life, and one of my things is I'm interested in a lot of things I've never um—kind of narrowed myself down to any one thing. I'm like—if, if I was—there hadn't been feminism along the way-- I would have liked to been an archivist or a historian, and I actually, before I got married, apply for a job at the Auckland University Library,³ and probably that course would have been the one I'd taken. So, I've written a lot of books on local history, and women's history as well. And I really, really enjoy doing that and wish I had more time to do it, but I—you know—I don't. I went into local body politics in 2002—stood for the Auckland Regional Council,⁴ because I'm also very interested in environmental issues. So,

¹ A creche is a preschool or daycare for young children. (“Creche.” Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creche> Accessed June 28, 2023.)

² Auckland is a city located in New Zealand. It is known for being one of the most populated cities in the country. (“Auckland.” Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auckland>. Accessed 15 May 2023.)

³ The Auckland University Library is a collection of resources that is meant to aid students and faculty in their research. (“Our organisation.” Libraries and Learning Services. <https://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/about-us/our-organisation>. Accessed 15 May 2023.)

⁴ The Auckland Regional Council was previously the council for the region of Auckland, New Zealand. The regional council transitioned into the Auckland council in 2010. (“Auckland Regional Council.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auckland_Regional_Council. Accessed 8 June 2023.)

and I've been—I was on the District Health Board⁵ for about 9 years, so, you know there's been a lot of threads to my life, and I haven't kind of stuck to one, so to speak.

NN: Right, right, that you're accomplished at *many* things it seems. So, tell me a little bit about what you do now. What your role in the community is?

SC: Right. So, I am on the Waitakere Ranges Local Board,⁶ and there were—There are 21 local boards in the Auckland Council, and then there's a governing body, which I was on. I stood for that when the Auckland Council was formed in 2010. I had one term there and didn't like it. Wanted to be more involved in my local community. So, I'm—so that role is answering questions and complaints from people on every imaginable subject. But my real passion is around historic heritage and the natural environment. So I've both got my, you know, projects I'm involved in on the ground and those things. But also, kind of trying to make sure that those are a priority in my local area, and that things get funded—um, which is a bit of a mission at the moment. But—so we don't have responsibility for everything in the local area. Some of those things are dealt with at a regional level, but we *do* have a responsibility for a lot. So, I would have relationships with community houses, with arts groups, the environmental groups. So that's—I spent a lot of time on that until last year I was also on the District Health Board, which was the biggest District Health Board in New Zealand, Waitematā,⁷ and that took—also took up quite a lot of time, and I tried to write around it. So I've got major sort of writing projects that I've been working on for quite some years, and I do that when I'm not doing those other things [chuckles].

NN: [Laughs] You are *busy*. So, so tell me how has and—and people in other countries may or may not have known, been following this—but recently Auckland—was the brunt of a *huge* weather event—How had that impacted the work that you do on the local board?

SC: We have it—We have very, very high rainfall in the area that I represent, because it's a forested--indigenous forest--and very hilly, and the rainfalls [are] something like 40% more than the rest of Auckland. And so there have been flooding episodes in the past. I've

⁵ District Health Boards are part of the New Zealand Ministry of Health, and provide medical services to districts in the country. (“District health boards.” Ministry of Health NZ. <https://www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/key-health-sector-organisations-and-people/district-health-boards>. Accessed 15 May 2023.)

⁶ The Waitakere Ranges local board is one of the local boards within the Auckland council. (“Contact Waitakere Ranges Local Board.” Auckland Council. <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/about-auckland-council/how-auckland-council-works/local-boards/all-local-boards/waitakere-ranges-local-board/Pages/contact-waitakere-ranges-local-board.aspx>. Accessed 15 May 2023.)

⁷ Waitemata is a district of New Zealand. It is located on the North Island and is known for being the most populated district of the country. (“About us.” Te Whatu Ora. <https://www.waitematadhb.govt.nz/about-us/about-dhbs/>. Accessed 18 May 2023.)

been involved in getting what do we call—resilience plans—for the local community, so that they know what to do when there is an emergency. You know, I'm pretty on the ground with those things. One of the things I'm trying to do at the moment is get a generator for the Piha Surf Life Saving Club⁸. So, it can be a welfare center in these kinds of instances. So yeah, that—that it's certainly the welfare and the well-being of our local communities is—and some of them are quite isolated, and is very important in something that I—I particularly, on my board, am involved in the West Coast, where you've got these small communities surrounded by a 17,000 hectare park, and who have to do everything for themselves, like volunteer fire service, volunteer first response, volunteer surf clubs, etc. So, you know, you don't have—you can't just get on the phone and a whole lot of urban resources will come your way. So, people have to be very self-reliant.

NN: Yeah.

SC: But I enjoy that.

NN: Oh, yeah. Well, that's good. You're enabling local communities, which is—which is really helpful. Um—So, I've done a little background work on you. What's your connection with—or the history of connection with, with Piha⁹?

SC: My father and my mother bought a property there in the 1930s. My father was—both my mother and father were very good sports people, and my father was one of the very early members of the Piha Surf Life Saving Club. So, I wrote, for instance, the history of the Piha Surf Life Saving Club for them as a volunteer thing, and my parents bought that property. It's still in the family. It's 25 acres. It takes a lot of looking after. And yeah, I still probably spend about half my time out there.

NN: Nice.

SC: A bit primitive as you get older.

NN: [Laughs heartily]

SC: So, you know—We've got—We have to have our own roof water, you know—own sewage system. And um—the worst thing is that, when you want to go to the toilet in the

⁸ The Piha Surf Life Saving Club is a group of lifeguards who maintain the safety of people at beaches in Piha, New Zealand. ("Our Club." Piha Surf Life Saving Club. <https://www.pihaslsc.com/our-club/>. Accessed 24 May 2023.)

⁹ Piha is a beach community located part of the Auckland region in New Zealand. It is known for being a popular vacation area. ("Piha." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piha>. Accessed 24 May 2023.)

middle of the night, which you get to do more when you get a bit older, you have to go *outside* and go downstairs. So, that's becoming increasingly unappealing as I get older, especially in the winter.

NN: [Laughs] Oh, yeah, I understand. I do a bit of tramping. So, I—yeah. On board with that. It gets more and more difficult. So, tell me, is there one significant, or are there more than one significant sort of achievement in your lifetime that you want to highlight?

SC: It's probably not what you would expect. Asking me as a feminist, but I chair the Parks and Heritage Committee on the Auckland Regional Council. And with the support of my colleagues, I managed to get a number of new parks, and amounting to 1,700 hectares of land that is now park land for people in the Auckland region. So, that's probably the thing—the most enduring sort of thing. And then I guess the other thing would be, you know, the Cartwright Inquiry¹⁰. Although it's sort of difficult now, watching some of that being eroded. Um, you know, at the present time, and some of us have tried to organize to kind of address that, but it's quite hard work, especially with the health system in such a state of upheaval.

NN: Yes, yeah. Yes, all the district boards are being—Well, I guess “amalgamated,” is not—Is not quite the word, but *disbanded*, in that it's going central, correct? All the—

SC: Yes, yes. And yeah, everything's being sort of centralized. And so, they disbanded all the boards like the one I was on, where you had elected people. I could have put my name forward to be on the national body. I don't know that I would have got there anyway, but I was—I found that a sort of a bit of a formidable prospect really. So I didn't put my name forward. Still working with groups of women on health issues.

NN: Hmm.

SC: But I don't. You know—I don't have any formal role at all.

NN: Right. And so, you—you've touched on it, and that was a big part. So, full confession: I wasn't actually in the country when that news story hit. But part of that was due—Would you like to sort of give us a potted summary of how the Cartwright Inquiry came about?

¹⁰ The Cartwright Inquiry was an investigation conducted by the New Zealand government into the National Women's Hospital regarding the treatment of cervical cancer. This inquiry has led to more patient-centered healthcare and better cervical cancer screening practices. (“The Cartwright Inquiry.” Women's Health Action. <https://www.womens-health.org.nz/the-cartwright-inquiry/>. Accessed 24 May 2023.)

SC: Yeah, a colleague of mine who was at the medical school kind of told us a little bit about an experiment that had happened at National Women's Hospital¹¹. And my colleague, Phillida Bunkle,¹² who was at that time at Victoria University¹³ Women's Studies, and I was involved in a group called Women's Health Action¹⁴—might have been called “Fertility Action” at the beginning—It was called Fertility Action. We put together--did a lot of an investigation--and put together a very large story that was published in a national magazine called Metro,¹⁵ and what—what it said very briefly, was that women going into, what was the premier public hospital for women in New Zealand with abnormal smears, cervical smears¹⁶—abnormal cervical smears were not given the standard treatment, but were watched, because the—Professor Green,¹⁷ who was in charge of this research, believed that carcinoma in situ (CIS),¹⁸ or cervical abnormalities, were not the same disease as invasive cervical cancer,¹⁹ and that CIS did not progress into cervical cancer. So he watched women, and brought them in very regularly to see what was happening. But they didn't always get the treatment they needed, and some of them progressed to cervical cancer, and a significant number of women died. So that, and it threw up looking at not just cervical cancer, and the particular doctors at National Women's [Hospital] [who] had

¹¹ The National Women's Hospital was a hospital located in New Zealand and dedicated to women's health. Now, it is a part of multiple hospitals in Auckland called collectively the Auckland City Hospital. (“Auckland City Hospital.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auckland_City_Hospital. Accessed 24 May 2023.)

¹² Phillida Bunkle was a New Zealand politician and held office from 1996 to 2002. She has also lectured at Victoria University. (“Phillida Bunkle.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phillida_Bunkle. Accessed 24 May 2023.)

¹³ Victoria University is a public institution located in Wellington, New Zealand. The university was first opened in 1897 and is known for its humanities and science programs. (“Victoria University of Wellington.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_University_of_Wellington. Accessed 2 Jun 2023.)

¹⁴ Women's Health Action, previously Fertility Action, is a charity that was started by Phillida Bunkle and Sandra Coney. The main goal of this charity is to address health inequalities, especially those pertaining to women's health. Women's Health Action is mainly known for aiding in the Cartwright Inquiry. (“About Us.” Women's Health Action. <https://www.womens-health.org.nz/about/>. Accessed 2 June 2023.)

¹⁵ *Metro* is a magazine that is published in New Zealand. The magazine focuses on lifestyles and the city of Auckland. (“*Metro* (magazine).” Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metro_\(magazine\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metro_(magazine)). Accessed 3 June 2023.)

¹⁶ A cervical smear is a type of medical test that is meant to help detect cancer in the uterus or cervix. (“cervical smear Definition & Meaning.” Merriam Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cervical%20smear>. Accessed 5 June 2023.)

¹⁷ Dr. Herb Green was a New Zealand obstetrician and researcher who studied cervical cancer. He led the controversial Cartwright Inquiry, which was later uncovered to be an unethical study which studied the untreated course of women diagnosed with cervical abnormalities without their consent. (“Herb Green.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herb_Green Accessed June 28, 2023.)

¹⁸ Carcinoma in situ is a type of medical illness in which cancer cells are only found in the place they originated and have not migrated to any other part of the body. (“Definition of carcinoma in situ.” NCI Dictionary of Cancer Terms. <https://www.cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-terms/def/carcinoma-in-situ>. Accessed 5 June 2023.)

¹⁹ Cervical cancer is defined as cancer that originates in the cervix. If left untreated, the cancer can spread to surrounding organs and body parts. (“What is Cervical Cancer?”. NCI. <https://www.cancer.gov/types/cervical>. Accessed 5 June 2023.)

obstructed there being a cervical screening program in New Zealand for women, but also issues around ethics. The roles of ethics committees, and about how research was conducted, and issues like informed consent.

NN: Mm-hmm.

SC: So, and out of the inquiry, the sort of positive things were, Helen Clark,²⁰ the PM (Prime Minister),²¹ announced a cervical screening program, which we still have, but not as in good shape now as it was. And there was a system of ethics committees set up, all throughout New Zealand. And one of the major things was the creation of the role of Health and Disability Commissioner²² and the system, which I think is once again a poor shadow of itself, of patient advocates in all public hospitals. So, and there's a Code of Patients' Rights,²³ which is in law, and I don't know whether New Zealand is the *only* country. It could be. Very few countries have informed consent enshrined in law.

NN: Hmm.

SC: So we have that in New Zealand. So that—those were probably teaching was, is—was completely overhauled in our medical schools. And yeah, there was—there were a lot of outcomes of it. I have to say, though, because we went through the inquiry and we thought sort of that would be it; Judge Sylvia Cartwright²⁴ came out with a report and recommendations which we—you know, were great. But years of my life, and Phillida's and others', went into keeping things on track after that. Because, after a period of time the medical profession regrouped through their—their kind of professional bodies. And you just had to keep on the case from—to make sure that things ended up how the judge had said they should be. So, that—that wasn't just something over in a couple of years for me. I spent many years after that, and I was still in a group called the Cartwright Collective of

²⁰ Helen Clark was a prime minister of New Zealand from 1999 to 2008. She is known for being one of few women to ever be the prime minister of the country. ("Helen Clark." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helen_Clark. Accessed 5 June 2023.)

²¹ A prime minister is the head of the government. ("Prime minister." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_minister. Accessed 5 June 2023.)

²² The Health and Disability Commissioner is a role in the New Zealand government that is dedicated to preserve the public's right of health and help the public receive adequate healthcare. ("Health and Disability Commissioner." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_and_Disability_Commissioner. Accessed 5 June 2023.)

²³ The Code of Patients' Rights is a list of 10 rights that is meant to protect individuals who receive any type of healthcare service in New Zealand. ("The Code and your rights." Health and Disability Commissioner. <https://www.hdc.org.nz/your-rights/the-code-and-your-rights/>. Accessed 5 June 2023.)

²⁴ Sylvia Cartwright was the governor general of New Zealand from 2001 to 2006 and was one of few women to be the governor general of the country. She is known for being the judge in the Cartwright Inquiry and has received many awards for her work. ("Silvia Cartwright." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silvia_Cartwright. Accessed 5 June 2023.)

Women²⁵ who were involved in the inquiry, who—who still try and keep an eye on things, and jump up and down when we need to.

NN: Yeah. Well, yes, and vigilance is key, I guess. But I just—I only just recently read the article that you and Phillida Bunkle put together, and it's riveting reading. Um—yeah. Yeah. So, thank you for that. You know, I know you think your environment stuff has been powerful and not to take away from that, but for me personally, that article was really powerful. Yeah.

SC: Yeah, I do wonder now, I have said since, I don't think in this—the way the media is in this day and age—that we would be able to get an article like that published. You know?

NN: You name names and—and you're—you're quite direct with—even though it's not actually, you know, you're very journalistic and very balanced. It's pretty obvious what's going on, and who is really to blame. So yeah, that was—that was fantastic. Thanks. Um, okay, I guess we should move on to the second set of our questions now, and that's the background about your work. So, you've got many strings. Maybe you should choose one string. So what—what drew you to the work that's most important to you? So, what drew you to that in the beginning? And then how has that work changed over time? Well, and how has it changed your life? And how is the life that you've lived changed the work that you've done over time?

SC: Right. That sounds [pauses then laughs] quite difficult. But, so probably best to talk about feminism. So I grew up with a very, very powerful father, who dominated my mother. And he—he was a great sportsman, and I had a, you know, very good childhood, and we're—my sister and I, we was only 2 girls—were expected to do everything. So, swimming in big surf, you know, playing sport. So that was my background. But also, seeing my mother—uh, the first thing my father did when he married my mother was sell her hockey boots, and she was a very good hockey player. So he was—he was a very powerful man. So, over the years, anyway, I always think nobody can intimidate me because fighting with my father through my childhood and teenage years was a good training. So, I went to an all-girls school, and then—and I was, had a year at university doing Latin and English. And then, um—I got pregnant; I got married. And in those days, you gave everything up then. You stopped everything. Although I did go back to the university with the support of my husband, who was very enlightened. Ex-husband I should say. And there were two

²⁵ The Cartwright Collective is a group of individuals who are dedicated to making sure that the recommendations of the Cartwright Inquiry are carried out. ("About the Cartwright Collective." Cartwright Inquiry. <https://cartwrightinquiry.com/index.php/2021/03/18/about-the-cartwright-collective/>. Accessed 5 June 2023.)

children. So when I went back to university with a child, I discovered that this was frowned on, and we got told—well I—we all got told that we had to choose between higher education and motherhood. And so, I actually banded together with a group of wonderful women, including one who was Professor Bonham from [unintelligible], Nancy Bonham— [It] was a student and staff Nursery Society we formed—and we set about forming a creche for students and staff with children, and I think it was probably that; I was flabbergasted because I've been brought up with the sort of girls-can-do-anything childhood. And going to a girl's school, although now I know they were sort of steering us towards nursing and lab assistants and things, and the science teaching wasn't flash. You know, I was pretty taken aback that anybody would try and sort of put obstacles in our way of continuing at university. So, that was—that was probably the kind of radicalizing experience for me. That was in the mid-sixties.

Um, and the group of women, I mean, some of them are still friends that I worked with then—Miriam Saphira.²⁶ I met her through that creche group, and she's still a very close friend of mine. So, you know, we were really pushing the boundaries, and um—you know, just realizing what we were up against. So, now where do we go from there? After I—I didn't get involved in feminism, although I'd read a few books, um—like *The Second Sex* [by] Simone de Beauvoir,²⁷ and I think a few others. But actually, I thought I had quite a good life. I had a husband; he had a good job. I had two children, and I met Sharon Cederman [eventually her collaborator], who tried to get me—who was very involved with Auck—I think it was Auckland Women's Liberation²⁸ and wanted me to get involved. And I famously said to her, "I don't need to do that. I've got a very nice husband." [Smirks] So there you are.

NN: [Laughs]

SC: And he *was*. He was—you know—he was a very liberal sort of man, and he didn't, you know, like a lot of men wouldn't have liked the wife going to university and putting their kid in a daycare. But that was—then I thought I *would* go along, being curious, and in those days, I went into consciousness raising. So, we—we did a fairly formal sort of

²⁶ Miriam Saphira is an artist and writer. She has many published works and has a PhD in Psychology. Dr. Saphira has received many awards for her contributions to the New Zealand community. ("About." Dr. Miriam Saphira CNZM. <https://miriamsaphira.co.nz/about-2/>. Accessed 5 June 2023.)

²⁷ *The Second Sex* is a book by French theorist Simone de Beauvoir, published in 1949 about how women have been treated by society throughout history. This book is regarded as helping inspire the second wave of feminism. ("*The Second Sex*." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Second_Sex. Accessed 5 June 2023.)

²⁸ The Auckland Women's Liberation started in the 1960s and was inspired by feminist movements in the United States. This movement in New Zealand argued against the traditional role of women and started to wind down during the 1980s. ("The women's liberation movement." Te Ara Encyclopedia. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/womens-movement/page-6>. Accessed 8 June 2023.)

consciousness raising group. And you see, then I met—I came across all sorts of other things I really didn't know about like girls who had brothers, and their experience. Um, so I—I kind of got a broader knowledge of women's lives. Um, and also—so through that I got involved in the Auckland Women's Liberation Group, and then—[it was] a very well organized group. We had men there at the beginning, but after about a year I think we went just women only. But, we—you know, I've still got some of my notes from that time, and we had all these different groups doing something: the Equal Pay and Opportunity Group.²⁹ And, you know, we were—had telephone trees, and we were highly organized. And one of the people in the group, Kitty Wishart, was the manager of the Auckland University Bookshop.³⁰ So, she used to bring along magazines and books that she was getting in through the bookshop, and that was opening your eyes to see the magazines from Australia, UK (United Kingdom), and America. Um, and—and like, I actually think that—and I don't know whether these books are written because I don't kind of bury my head in academic stuff—but the way that the women's movement put together its policies in thinking and analysis was as, sort of like a gigantic intellectual exercise, which doesn't sort of get credited. It's sort of seen as activism, or something like that. But that the whole unraveling how we saw the world and building a new picture for us—that—so, yeah. And then we sit in this group. Well, you know, there's a whole lot of us with sort of skills and English language. Why don't we start the magazine? And that was when I got involved with *Broadsheet Magazine*³¹ in 1972.

NN: Right. Very cool. So, was your—was your goal with writing the magazine was it to actually then sort of translate what was happening as far as the academic side of things, to actually make it more accessible, or?

SC: I think we—we were more interested in reaching out to women, and as a sort of vehicle for putting these new beliefs and ideas in front of women. I mean—But having said that, I don't know what we mean by “academic,” quite. Because yes, some of the formal works like during that time—I think it was Patricia Sinclair³² wrote the *History of the Suffrage*

²⁹ The Council for Equal Pay and Opportunity is dedicated to making sure that all women in New Zealand in all types of occupations receive the same pay as everyone else. (“Coalition for Equal Value Equal Pay (CEVEP).” NZ History. <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/women-together/coalition-equal-value-equal-pay>. Accessed 5 June 2023.)

³⁰ The Auckland University Bookshop is located on the campus of the University of Auckland and sells textbooks and other books for students of the university. (“University bookshop for course textbooks.” University of Auckland. https://uoa.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/206/~university-bookshop-for-course-textbooks. Accessed 8 June 2023.)

³¹ *Broadsheet* was a magazine that originated in Auckland, New Zealand and circulated from 1972 to 1997. This magazine was regarded as a feminist magazine. (“*Broadsheet* (magazine).” Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Broadsheet_\(magazine\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Broadsheet_(magazine)). Accessed 5 June 2023.)

³² Patricia Grimshaw is a women's and indigenous people's history scholar. She has received many awards for her work. (“Patricia Grimshaw.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patricia_Grimshaw. Accessed 5 June 2023.)

Movement in New Zealand.³³ And you know, my—my copy of that, which I've still got, is kind of—actually I've pinched it off someone else. It's got someone else's name written inside it. But it was, um—you know, well-thumbed, and my copy of William Sutch's *Women with a Cause*,³⁴ in which he talked about some of this in union women, you know—mine's falling [apart], you know, it's just in pieces. So, there were people who were writing works that we fell on and—and absorbed, and they went into building our kind of case and our activism through the magazine.

I—I also just wanna mention here, too, because I'd forgotten [brief pause] that I also believe that you should [know]. I didn't like getting too far away from the real-life experiences of—that New Zealand woman having at the time.

So I worked from the first day at the Auckland Medical Aid Centre,³⁵ which was the first abortion clinic in New Zealand. I was a counselor and I worked there for 10 years. So, I felt that really kept my feet on the ground. Like you can—In the women's movement at the time you *could* start living a life that was just *so* far removed from other women. We were all living in places like, you know, inner city suburbs like Ponsonby,³⁶ Grey Lynn³⁷; a lot of people—women were living in—and my marriage broke up in '73, and I went and lived with my sister. So there were women living in groups right through that area. And you, you know—that was where you partied. That was where you went to meetings. And it could take you quite a long way away from the woman living in the suburbs like I had lived in, in Papakura³⁸.

NN: Right, yeah, yeah.

SC: So because I'd had that experience of being a woman in the suburbs, and I've been on the school committee and all those kind of things—It was good to keep in contact with the

³³ *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand* by Patricia Grimshaw is a historical account of New Zealand women achieving the right to vote. This book was first published in 1972. ("Women's Suffrage in New Zealand." Smith's Bookshop. <https://smithsbookshop.co.nz/p/women-s-suffrage-in-new-zealand>. Accessed 5 June 2023.)

³⁴ *Women with a Cause* by William Sutch was published in 1974 and accounts the history behind the women's movement in New Zealand. ("Women with a Cause." Bibliomania. <https://www.bibliomania.ws/pages/books/29401/w-b-sutch/women-with-a-cause>. Accessed 5 June 2023.)

³⁵ The Auckland Medical Aid Center (AMAC) is an organization that specializes in administering medical abortions and other contraceptive services. ("How AMAC can help me." Auckland Medical Aid Centre. <https://amac.org.nz/how-amac-can-help-me/>. Accessed 6 June 2023.)

³⁶ Ponsonby is a suburb located in Auckland, New Zealand. It is known for the many shops and restaurants located in the suburb. ("Ponsonby, New Zealand." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ponsonby,_New_Zealand. Accessed 6 June 2023.)

³⁷ Grey Lynn is a suburb located in Auckland, New Zealand. It is known for its park, Grey Lynn Park, which hosts an annual festival that many people visit. ("Grey Lynn." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grey_Lynn. Accessed 6 June 2023.)

³⁸ Papakura is a suburb located in Auckland, New Zealand. The Auckland Council is in charge of this suburb. ("Papakura." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papakura>. Accessed 6 June 2023.)

struggles that women had. So, that's why—well not the only reason--I believed in women's right to choose an abortion, but I was a counselor there, as I said, for 10 years. And that was very political, as you know at the time. You know—we—the law—there were several law changes after that, both to try and close the clinic down, but ultimately to make abortion more accessible to women. So I was doing both.

NN: Gosh, I—I can't imagine what that work must have been like, because I imagine it was fraught emotionally, if you were the counselor there with women who possibly had to hide a lot, you know, it had to be underground, basically.

SC: Yes, but women kept it private, on the whole. But, you know, we had girls pregnant to their fathers. We—you know, we had everything imaginable. I once had a girl pregnant to father and the wife pregnant to—to the man. So yeah, there was—it was, you know, people accept abortion now, but it wasn't—a lot of people didn't welcome it. We had lots of protests outside. So, you get these traumatized women coming in, having had to go past crosses and chanting. And we had an arson where the building was set fire to. People have, you know, people—young women now—I have to stop myself saying that 'cause I—you know. But there's not a lot of knowledge about that young feminists now of just what it was like at that time, and—

NN: It is hard to imagine. It's very hard to imagine, you know, that it was that dangerous, and in some places—

SC: Well, it's not—It wasn't just the abortion. It was also like, when I broke up with my husband, there was no benefits. I didn't—I didn't have an equality in um—our possessions that, you know—there was no kind of Matrimonial Property Act.³⁹ You know—so, it was quite hard. Being—and it's probably—being in the Women's movement you were with—'cause I mean I had friends who didn't want me to come to their house anymore because they thought I'd run off with their husband—that sort of thing. You know, that you actually developed a whole new social milieu and friendship networks of woman who thought like you. Um—so I wouldn't have missed it for the world, you know? [chuckles] But it was—

NN: It was—sorry to interrupt, but it sounds as though the parallel development between your career and your personal life--they almost grew together.

SC: Yes, it's true. Hmm.

³⁹ The Property Act of 1976 is a New Zealand law that determines how property should be divided when married couples separate. The law generally states that property should be split equally between partners. ("Property (Relationships) Act 1976." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Property_\(Relationships\)_Act_1976](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Property_(Relationships)_Act_1976). Accessed 6 June 2023.)

NN: Yeah. Okay. Hey, thank you for that. So, perhaps we should move to a more sort of a reflective outlook, and maybe you can tell me what you—how you understand the term “feminism,” and what has it meant to your work?

SC: Interesting, because at the beginning we always used “Women's Liberation,” you know? Feminism was a later term that came along. I consider I'm a radical feminist. I mean, one of the things when I was editing *Broadsheet* was, you know, like there were these – there was a plethora of sorts of feminism. I'm not an equal rights feminist. I am, you know, I'm a radical feminist, and subscribe to that set of beliefs. So I don't—you know, I think there's a lot about the world that needs radical change quite apart from which would benefit woman, but would benefit a lot of people, too. I mean, I just abhor the way in the last, you know, 20 in a bit years, we've gone down this neoliberal path. You know, I—but I subscribe to some very sort of basic beliefs, and they were probably there before I encountered feminism, and those are about people having a fair go. I—I believe in egalitarianism. I don't like the gap between the extremely wealthy and the, you know—poor off people. So yes, there's a lot I'd change about the world, as well the sort of feminist things that that we went after and achieved because, you know, a lot of what's happening at the moment, we don't sort of hear that about women. It's how women are affected by the—the sort of low wage economy that we've got. We used to talk about that sort of thing, but I don't hear too much now, because we had groups like Women in the Trade Union Movement,⁴⁰ and so there was a Working Women's Charter,⁴¹ and you know, we were organized, and there was a voice; there was a very strong voice coming from women in these different areas that would have tackled a lot of these things. Whereas now, if there's something about women that's, you know, that we've got terrible problems around violence against women. You know, nobody's questioned pornography much these days, but there's still a lot that needs to be done for women. But it's very had in this kind of climate of individualism, and the sort of economic model of global trade we're following—it drives me up the wall [chuckles].

NN: So—so, would you say that perhaps the face of feminism has, well, you would say, I guess, that—that it's changed. But—but perhaps, from what you were saying, it

⁴⁰ The Women in the Trade Union Movement first started regarding the working conditions of women tailors. The union was started in 1889 and ended in 1945. (“First women’s trade union formed.” New Zealand History. <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/page/first-womens-trade-union-formed#:~:text=12%20July%201889&text=The%20first%20women's%20trade%20union,by%20far%20the%20largest%20group>. Accessed 6 June 2023.)

⁴¹ The working women’s charter consisted of 16 clauses surrounding equality for women. Some rights included equal pay, better working conditions and childcare, and more. This charter was included in the New Zealand labor policy 40 years ago. (“The Working Women’s Charter of 1980.” National Library of New Zealand. <https://natlib.govt.nz/events/the-working-womens-charter-of-1980-august-03-2022#:~:text=The%2016%20clause%20Charter%20demanded,parental%20leave%2C%20and%20reproductive%20rights>. Accessed 6 June 2023.)

seems like the trade unions aren't perhaps, as—as vocal or equal pay for equal work, and that kind of thing. Would that be correct?

SC: Yes, like there was a great uprising—and, you know, things like the teachers' unions, the nursing unions will be mainly, still mainly women. You know, *really* had a focus on improving the conditions for women, and those were also things like leave-- maternity leave, childcare—all those kinds of things that enable woman to work. Whereas now it mostly seems to be left to—to individual women and families to sort of make their own arrangement with these things. And it's still—although, you know, woman *can* do anything. But when you actually look at a lot of things, you still see how male dominated our society is. And you often see—think the woman who is sort of in particular positions are this sort of tokenistic kind of—it's not, you know, there's still a *huge* way to go. But I mean, there's also a number of other beliefs that I got out of feminism—my feminism education. And one of them that I adhere to really strongly is that you measure your progress by the women at the bottom. So, the women who are the cleaners and the caregivers, who aren't even getting a living wage. Um—you know, those are the women that we should be measuring how women have done—not by the fact that we've got a woman Prime Minister, or we've got women in senior law firms and things like that. And I think that for the women at the bottom, things are pretty grim.

NN: Yeah, yeah. So, so you would have heard the term intersectionality, I guess.

SC: Yes.

NN: What's—what's your take on that? Because it would seem to me that perhaps the women at the bottom aren't always white.

SC: No, well I get maddened by the term intersectionality, quite honestly, because it is sort of some of the—this sort of current thing is like calling the feminism of the second wave, “White women's feminism,” and it's completely ahistorical. The people who take this line actually have never bothered to go back and look what we were actually doing. And the unions that included the lowest working women were active around feminism and supported by the feminist movement. And um—there were campaigns about things like night work for women, women being able to work in the freezing works, shop assistants, you know, these were *all* things that were on the agenda. So the idea that it was some sort of middle class, airy, fairy thing is—is, and that might—I mean, New Zealand was a kind of fairly separated in terms of relationships between—especially in towns--Pākehā⁴² people

⁴² Pākehā is a term originating from the Māori language that refers to individuals of Eurocentric descent. (“Pākehā.” Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P%C4%81keh%C4%81>. Accessed 6 June 2023.)

and Māori⁴³ and Pacific Island⁴⁴ people, but—they actually did come together in the women's movement in New Zealand. I can't comment on other places except to say that we got a heap from America about, you know—Angela Davis's⁴⁵ books and bell hooks. And so, it wasn't like we went ignorant of these things. I mean Angela Davis was on the cover of *Thursday* magazine,⁴⁶ which was a mainstream women's magazine in the 1970s, you know. So, there's a mythology that has developed about what we did and didn't do. I mean, I was very friendly with a number of key Māori women, and their thing was, yes, they were critical of what we were doing, but they didn't want to be amalgamated into the women's movement. They wanted their own movement.

NN: Right.

SC: And so, originally called the Black Women's Movement,⁴⁷ that they were involved in Aotearoa⁴⁸, and there was sort of kind of like a supportive relationship around these things. And no, it wasn't perfect. And no, we didn't know everything. No, we didn't know what we know now, um, but it wasn't—certainly wasn't blind to the issues for Māori women. When I was at *Broadsheet* we published the Māori Sovereignty Articles⁴⁹ over three issues of the magazine, and then we published it as a book. So, and that was—that was a, you know, an alliance between Māori women and the feminist movement. There were some Maori woman who got very involved in the feminist movement. But on the whole, they carved their own path, and—but, there was support for—It was—It was

⁴³ Māori refers to the descendants of the original Polynesian settlers who lived in New Zealand. ("Māori people." Wikipedia.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C4%81ori_people#:~:text=M%C4%81ori%20\(M%C4%81ori%3A%20%5B%CB%88ma%CB%90%C9%94%C9%BEi%5D.between%20roughly%201320%20and%201350](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C4%81ori_people#:~:text=M%C4%81ori%20(M%C4%81ori%3A%20%5B%CB%88ma%CB%90%C9%94%C9%BEi%5D.between%20roughly%201320%20and%201350). Accessed 6 June 2023.)

⁴⁴ Pacific Island refers to individuals who are from Polynesia, Micronesia, or Melanesia. ("Pacific Islander." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Islander. Accessed 6 June 2023.)

⁴⁵ Angela Davis is an author and feminist activist who currently lectures at University of California, Santa Cruz. She has received many awards for her work and was named one of the most influential women in the world during 2020. ("Angela Davis." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angela_Davis. Accessed 6 June 2023.)

⁴⁶ *Thursday* is a magazine that circulated in New Zealand from 1968 to 1976, and was geared towards younger women. The magazine was regarded as a feminist magazine. ("Thursday: the magazine for younger women." Auckland Museum. https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/collection/object/am_library-catalogq40-83458. Accessed 6 June 2023.)

⁴⁷ The Black Women's Movement was started in 1980 to address issues involving racism, sexism, health, and more. ("Challenging racism." Te Ara Encyclopedia. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/27912/challenging-racism>. Accessed 7 June 2023.)

⁴⁸ Aotearoa is a Māori word that translated to New Zealand. ("Aotearoa." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aotearoa>. Accessed 7 June 2023.)

⁴⁹ The Māori Sovereignty Articles were a series of articles in *Broadsheet* magazine that addressed how imperialism affected Māori culture and the process of Māori people recovering from the imperialism. These articles were later published into a book called *Māori Sovereignty*. ("Donna Awatere's *Māori sovereignty*." Te Ara Encyclopedia. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/document/45511/donna-awateres-maori-sovereignty>. Accessed 7 June 2023.)

somewhat controversial, because when we did, you know—had a lot in *Broadsheet* about different Māori women and the what the issues were and etc., etc., some people got upset, but it wasn't really big. So, is that intersectionality, you know. It's kind of like—I mean, every—probably every generation has to invent its own—Well, I mean I—I think that now about the women who were in things like the Council for Equal Pay and Opportunity when I got involved, and we were quite superior to them. Because we thought they were sort of old fuddy duddies⁵⁰ from the 1950s who had—So, and we didn't really know what they'd done. Or how hard it was, you know, so I suppose it's just something each generation does. But I would have hoped that younger woman now got more up to speed with what the woman's movement was doing in New Zealand through the '70s and '80s.

NN: I think—I think from interviews I've conducted that—that yeah, I think there is—there's more knowledge now, and more gratitude for what's gone before. So, that would be *my* take on it at least. So, it's interesting, you said—So, so I'll throw this back at you and think, you think—tell me if I've characterized it correctly. It seems like for—for the Māori women that they were supported, but they—they did still—they chose to go in a slightly separate way. They chose to be their own entity. Would that be correct?

SC: Yes, absolutely. And also, they were—you have to remember that they were very often working alongside their men and their groups involved men, and the women's movement at that time was pretty separatist, you know, like I had male children, and it was you not a happy, you know, it was difficult having male children at the time. So, working with men definitely, you know, wouldn't have been welcomed. But, you know, lots of feminists got involved in the Springbok tour⁵¹ and Bastion Point⁵² and [Waitangi](#),⁵³ and I'd got arrested there. Went to prison. So, it wasn't that we were ignoring. *But* you weren't going to be a leader in, you know—Māori women's issues. You would—you would *support* them.

⁵⁰ Fuddy-duddy refers to an individual who is old-fashioned or antiquated. ("Fuddy-duddy Definition & Meaning." Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fuddy-duddy#:~:text=%3A%20one%20that%20is%20old%2Dfashioned%2C%20unimaginative%2C%20or%20conservative>. Accessed 7 June 2023.)

⁵¹ The Springbok tour of 1981 refers to a collecting of protests that occurred in response to New Zealand visiting a South African rugby team called the Springboks. ("The 1981 Springbok rugby tour." New Zealand History. <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/1981-springbok-tour>. Accessed 7 June 2023.)

⁵² Bastion Point is a piece of land that sits above the Waitemata Harbor in New Zealand. It has much historical significance, as many protests occurred there during the 1970s in response to European settlers attempting to remove the Māori. ("Bastion Point." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bastion_Point. Accessed 7 June 2023.)

⁵³ The treaty of Waitangi is a historical document that is regarded as the founding document of New Zealand. The day the treaty was signed is celebrated annually and is known as the national day of New Zealand. ("Waitangi Day." New Zealand History. <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/treaty/waitangi-day>. Accessed 7 June 2023.)

NN: Yes.

SC: But it was their, you know, their issues that they should lead, which they did very well.

NN: Yeah. No, I understand. And that makes perfect sense to me. And still today, I think that that's the case. Okay, so let's—let's move on now to the fourth of the sixth topics, and this one is the relationship between feminist scholarship and activism. And you've touched on this a little bit. But how do you put the relationship between scholarship and activism in general, and in your own work? And the final question in that lot that I'm gonna ask you—and I guess I should start with that: Do you identify as a feminist?

SC: Yes. Yeah, I'm a radical feminist. And I say that to people when I need to. It came out recently. Something—something was said at one meeting [chuckles]. Anyway! Yes, I am. I'm—I'm not quite sure what you mean by the sort of relationship between academic and activism. 'Cause there's some funny things that's happened in universities around feminism. That is sort of like it—very—got—it wasn't particularly useful for the women's movement.

NN: Want to speak to that a little bit? Because that would be your answer to that question.

SC: Ahh—well, not particularly, I mean [pauses briefly]—I mean we soaked up books, and you know, works that were being written by people all over the world.

NN: Right.

SC: That—that were sort of quite academic, but they didn't necessarily—well, I mightn't have even noticed whether they came out of universities or umm—We, we—and like, we had relationships with the women that were running the women's studies courses and universities, which have also gone down a funny route since. So, there *was* definitely a—relationships between the university and I'm just not—I'm fumbling around here. I'm not being very coherent. But certainly, in terms of our ideas and kind of belief systems were very influenced by work the of--you know, authoritative works that were put together in all those countries. Not—But they weren't necessarily like academic work. Like some of the best stuff that I used to grab was coming out of some of the overseas women's magazines, but you know—they were—they were definitely sort of analytical.

NN: Right. Yeah, and I guess that's what I mean. So, you could think of it as—as like, theory, or more sort of like an academic focus. And then putting that into practice I guess, or what—yeah, activism.

SC: Yes, and it was certainly the *forms* of feminism were very much being fluid instead of worked on through all the time that I was very involved in a—in a sort of organized women's movement. Because, I mean, we had things like in the seventies like, you know, that whole development of that cultural feminism and spiritual feminism, which I personally have got no time for. *But* you know that was what people were doing. And then, you—you know, you would have debates, and we had a number of sort of big women's caucuses, not just the United Women's Conventions,⁵⁴ but there were kind of retreats, and were quite big groups of women—would go away, and people would present things and do papers, and we would argue and piss at each other sometimes [chuckles]. So yeah, I mean, the whole kind of policy and framework of feminism was sort of a work in progress the whole time I was involved in the feminist movement, and I really valued that about it. That's one of the things I don't like about today is that, you know, everything's too black and white for me. The subtleties are much more interesting, and the—and I think the women's movement *did* do that. It got very heated at times, but I think the women's movement did do that. It didn't have—Yeah.

NN: Right. Well, it seems to me, too, that, in having read the *Metro* magazine piece that you wrote with Phillida Bunkle that your—certainly your knowledge of feminism and the theory and whatever else you'd read—came out in that, and you know must have reached quite a few women who would not normally have even thought about, “Well, why are these issues?” You know, “I wouldn't have known about this if this hadn't been brought to my attention.” So, so to me, that's—that's a *form* of activism. So I'm guessing that that would be the connection, one connection.

SC: Yes, definitely.

NN: Okay, so let's see, we—you identify. Okay. So, this next section and the two final sections are really talking about where you see what's happening with what the work that you do, and talking about feminism in New Zealand, and its links to international. So, the fifth question is, what is your analysis, evaluation, and expectation of the development of feminism in New Zealand? That's a big one.

SC: Yes, you'll have to say it again. You mean going forward?

⁵⁴ The United Women's Conventions were a series of meetings held during 1973 to 1979 in various cities across New Zealand. (“United Women's Convention.” National Library of New Zealand. <https://natlib.govt.nz/records/22366293>. Accessed 7 June 2023.)

NN: Yes, yeah, like. And what's like—maybe let's start—Well, no, let's do it all: Analysis, evaluation, and expectation of the development of feminism in New Zealand?

SC: Right. Well, I'm not sure what the feminist movement is in New Zealand anymore. I mean there are—there are particular, you know, things like the “Me Too”⁵⁵ that's come here. [Pauses] But it's quite fragmented. There doesn't seem to be a sort of coherent worldview that I'm aware of, or any groups that are espousing it. Um, we were pretty well-organized, and—but now it these, these groups that have got a particular interest, but there's lots of gaps. You know—could we do a United Women's Convention and bring everybody together? I think also, the—getting back to the fact that there's very little subtlety in the feminist voice these days. It's kind of, and the whole thing with cancel culture and that sort of thing really gets in the way of being sort of more nuanced about what's going on. And I find that really sad, you know, and I think some of the older feminists that I've talked to feel that way too. That--and I have to be careful what I'm saying here--but you know, there's a lot of different strands to life, and some of them, as far as women are concerned, are not getting much attention. And the violence against women, which you know we *all* know and acknowledge, is a terrible problem in New Zealand: there doesn't seem to be any kind of coherent program for how that's going to be addressed. You'll hear about, you know—this refuge, that's all still there, and that was all started in the seventies. But, you know, what's our critique of masculinity in New Zealand, and why we have this problem? And I would start to talk about kind of our attitude towards sport, male sport, etc. But we're just hearing—I think the needs to be a more a broader, more cohesive platform going forward. Than what we've got, and I don't know how that would come about. I don't see that us older feminists could do it, and I yeah, I don't know what they do in universities these days. Whether there are groups of feminists in universities, but uh—yeah, it's interesting how we all like moths to a light bulb in my era. Kind of got attracted and brought together. What would be the thing that brought together, and maybe the other thing is that social media actually gets in the way of it, because it—kind of—it's enough to put up your post, and you know, sound off on—on social media. But that's sort of here today and gone today. So, I don't know what the mechanism would be for, um—for organizing. And probably younger people might say, “Well, you don't have to, you know?” But I don't—and it's the same with some of the other issues, too. You know, that I'm interested in--like I'm interested in climate change, and you know—there doesn't seem to be any kind of formidable response to these things that we should be responding to. And

⁵⁵ The ‘Me Too’ movement brings awareness to issues such as sexual abuse and rape culture. The movement started when individuals online used #metoo to stand with survivors and to show how large the problem was. (“MeToo movement.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MeToo_movement. Accessed 7 June 2023.)

so, then this is a little bugbear of mine. So, in the absence of any kind of organized something, the people get to speak for woman now some of the woman MP's⁵⁶ who have no mandate in my view. They belong to a political party; they don't come out of a feminist movement. But they often be taken as the ones—that are the kind of oracles when it comes to women's issues. Because there is no other obvious sort of voice except around some particular issues.

NN: Right, yeah, I was thinking that if you were as you were talking, actually it's sort of the difference between the public and the private. So, those that speak the loudest get heard. So, it's those public figures. But they're not necessarily the people who *should* be speaking, yeah.

SC: No, they're self-appointed. Like there was, in the women's movement for all its difficulties that, you know, you *were* part of a broad-based movement with women's rights through New Zealand and groups' rights through New Zealand. And so, you know, if somebody kind of stepped up and spoke out of turn, they'd very quickly hear about it, whereas now there's no checks and balances like that, you know—anybody could just appoint themselves as the spokesperson on women and get up and do it, and the women's ministry sort of seems to have gone into a hole. So, we just—and the older groups—it's quite interesting that what we get --these waves of feminism and in between the older women's groups are the things that hold the flame. And I became very aware of that when I wrote the history of the Auckland YWCA.⁵⁷ And they started in the nineteenth century, and if you look, whenever there was a sort of lull in feminist activity, it would be *those* organizations that spoke up for women and I'm not hearing that either. So, I'm still in touch with YWCA. And they do a lot of leadership things with young women and that sort of thing, but the kind of voice of women is likely to come from a media star or a, you know, a politician or something like that, rather than somebody embedded in a movement.

NN: Right. Yeah, and that's where social media comes in, I guess, you know. That's very easy to be a media star on social me—you know, in social movements. Yeah, okay, so—hmm. So, you've talked a little bit about the relationships with other women's organizations in the country and other activists. What about international connections kind of—that sort of thing? Do you have connections with other—

⁵⁶ MP stands for members of parliament. It refers to individuals of New Zealand who occupy the House of Representatives. ("New Zealand Parliament." Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand_Parliament. Accessed 7 June 2023.)

⁵⁷ Auckland YWCA is an organization that helps younger women living in New Zealand gain confidence and better opportunities. The organization was first founded in 1885. ("About Us." YWCA Auckland.

<https://www.ywca.org.nz/auckland/>. Accessed 7 June 2023.)

either—however, you'd classify your work: as activist or scholarship or organizing in other countries? Do you have any specific connections with people?

SC: I belong to, for—despite everything I've just said—a number of online groups who are international. Um, Australia—mainly Australia and the UK, I think. 'Cause you don't always know, you know, like you're talking away to people online. And I belong to a group called FOWL: Feminist Older Women Lobbyists—god, I won't get it right. Feminist Older Women—I often say lesbians⁵⁸ but I don't think the “L” stands for lesbians anyway [laughs], which I would probably get about half a dozen, you know, emails from them every day. And yeah, no people in America, too. You don't always know whether they could actually be living in the next suburb to yours or they could be in Canada,⁵⁹ couldn't they? So, I'm involved in those groups. I'm involved in the Cartwright Collective, but that's— that's just New Zealand. Um, yeah, I mean, I'm not doing huge amounts for feminism these days. The main area is continuing to follow up in the Cartwright—health issues. I mean, I sort of when your time is going—I'm 78--I've kind of been trying to spend time doing things that I really want to do. So I almost shy away from some of the more controversial topics, because I just sort of think I don't need it in my life. I don't—I don't need to get wound up and aggravated about things that—*or* sometimes it just looks like enormous effort would have to be put in. And I think I haven't got--there's other things that are more important at the moment.

NN: Yeah. Yeah, I understand that. So, you talked a little bit about this particular book. Do you see any difference in the similarities in any of the issues that—that these groups or your connections with people internationally—any of the—any differences or similarities on issues that come up?

SC: Similarities between—?

NN: In like the focus perhaps on—in FOWL, for example, the—

SC: Yeah.

NN: Yeah. Are there—from between, like, what happens in New Zealand and then what happens overseas?

⁵⁸ Lesbian is defined as an individual who identifies as a woman and is attracted to other individuals of the same gender. (“Lesbian.” Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lesbian>. Accessed 7 June 2023.)

⁵⁹ Canada is a country located in North America. It consists of provinces and territories and is known for being one of the largest countries in the world in regard to land area. (“Canada.” Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada>. Accessed 7 June 2023.)

SC: No, I think these sort of concerns are pretty consistent. Um, but with people from different countries, I don't—well they're all Western countries, aren't they? So, there would probably be other issues if I was tapped into some of those other countries which, when I was doing *Broadsheet*, we had those kind of connections to feminists and different—in other countries. But I don't now really apart from the online things.

NN: Right. So, is there a difference in the way that people approach the issues. If the issues are the same—are they sort of like broached in different ways, or?

SC: Not really.

NN: Not really. Okay. So, okay—I think that we've actually come to the end of my set of questions. Do you have any other final sort of comments before I switch off the recording mode? And I'd like you to stay around a little bit after I've switched off recording, please.

SC: Okay. Um, I'd probably like to comment on the whole trans issue, which is—which is, you know, I think absorbing a lot of feminist energy, and just become a sort of a real focus. And I worry that [pauses]—it's a—uh, it's bit of a diversion. I mean, it's—it's kind of like *that* is where a lot of feminists' attention is going, but there's other issues are also still needing to be solved, and—and, you know, I understand about the trans issue, and—but I—I don't know. But, you know, the—the violence against women, which is a sort of global phenomenon, really, really pains me—that women are still subject to sexual violence and physical violence. Um, and we just, you know, just and—and there are lots of ways in which it's kind of being made worse um, through, you know, social media people get access to all sorts of materials. And in the days gone by they—they wouldn't have. You know, in my day it was a scrappy little magazine you had, you know, boys kept under their pillows, but now it's just kind of everywhere, and it's been kind of normalized in lots of—lots of ways. Yeah. So, I do worry about that—that we, we—you know, we're just not making the progress on some issues.

And another one is also with—where there has been enormous slippage—and nobody talks about it—is the stereotyping of girls, you know? Like we—fought for girls to be able to be, do whatever they like, to play whatever games they liked, to wear the clothes they liked, to have the hair chopped off or whatever it was, and we put *enormous* amounts of energy to—into children's literature, and making sure that there were books that presented strong female role models for girls, and it just sort of feels like that is another area where there's been huge slippage, where—I mean I just about throw up when I go into children's toy shops and shops. I can remember—I'll tell you a funny story. I went to Smith

and Caughey's,⁶⁰ and I was looking for something for a baby that was coming in my family. And I picked up one that was mauve, and the shop assistant said, "Oh, that's usually for girls." And I said, "Oh, well in my day it was for lesbians" [laughs then pauses briefly]. But *all* that stuff's got really, really terrible, um—you know, you don't ever see a girl with short hair. When I watch the New Zealand Rugby women playing. They've all got great big, long heads of annoying hair.

NN: Well, to be fair actually, many of the men do, too [laughs].

SC: That's *true* [laughs]. Why would you want to if you could have it on—anyway—I just really worry about that stereotyping.

NN: Hmm.

SC: Um—at the same time they seem to be off, you know—like girls can do anything. So, maybe it doesn't matter. It's—but it is sort of like a very conformist sort of presentation of their individuality. So I do think there's a heck of a lot, there's been slippage, and there's lots of unfinished business. And that, you know, a lot of attention is going into a very narrow range of issues.

NN: Thanks so much.

SC: Thank you!

⁶⁰ Smith and Caughey's is a department store located in New Zealand. ("Smith+Caughey's." Smith and Caughey's. <https://www.smithandcaugheys.co.nz/>. Accessed 7 June 2023.)