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POL/AAS 307

SECTION ONE

Person Interviewed:

Madelyn Ross

Interviewee's title or position:

Madelyn Ross current position is Director of Hopkins-Nanjing Center Washington D.C. and Associate Director of John Hopkins School of Advance International Studies (SAIS) China. She has experience in US-China relations including education, economics and government relations.

Date:

Friday November 18, 2016

Time, and length of interview:

47:57 Via Audio Recording

Your objective in conducting this interview:

Our objectives for conducting this interview is very similar to the objectives of this course. We wanted to examine the role Madelyn Ross plays in U.S.-Asian relations as a women and what experiences has she had throughout her life that brought her to where she is now. Also, we wanted to know the knowledge of the different ways women have made an impact on the relationships between U.S. and the many nations in Asia. This interview would help us speak with a primary source directly and learn just how U.S- and Asian relations have changed. We also wished to share some of the knowledge we received from our interviewee.

SECTION TWO

With a little help from Professor Christoff, she told us how Madelyn Ross was one of the first students to arrive in China from America once President Carter normalized relations. Afterwards, we decided to google our interviewee. The first thing that came up was her LinkedIn page. From there, we found out the basics of her life. Madelyn Ross went to Princeton University in obtaining a BA in East Asian Studies. Also, she went to Columbia University in the City of New York to obtain her MA in International Affairs. It was intriguing to see how she went to Fudan University where she earned a certificate in modern Chinese literature. Subsequently, we looked at her experience and were captivated by them all. Firstly, she was an Editor-in-Chief of the China Business Review and Executive Director of the China Business Forum. We were astonished how she went to the business field since the page didn't even mention her earning that degree. Secondly, she was an Editor in Washington Journal of Modern China, Director of China initiatives and China Coordinator and the Director of Global Consortium before her current position. We knew that her passion was to create dialogues and friendships that will help illuminate China to America and America to China. From all these experiences, we were able to construct questions for the interview. While we were creating the questions to ask her, we decided to organize in regards to a chronological perspective. We broke it into three parts; Childhood, Education, and Career Path/Reflections. We sent Madelyn a couple of questions prior to the interview to make her feel more prepared and comfortable. Also, it was to give her a sense of the direction we were going. The questions we sent her are listed below:

Childhood

- 1. Is there any significant event or family member in your childhood that sparked your interest in China?*
- 2. How would you describe U.S. and Asian relations when you were our age?*

Education and Studies in China

1. *Was Asian studies your initial major in your undergrad? (Did you change majors?)*
2. *What did the normalization of U.S.-China relations mean to you?*

Career Path and Reflections

1. *How would you describe your responsibilities as Director of Hopkins-Nanjing Center Washington Office?*
2. *Could you give us an example of when you fought for a certain cause and how did you feel about the situation and outcome?*

While we sent her these questions, we prepared more because we wanted to be ready and show her how engrossed we were in her life. The questions listed below are what we made to ask her and didn't send it to her:

Childhood

1. *What college did you go to?*
2. *Did you have any experiences that influenced your interest in Asian studies? (We didn't ask this because she answered that question while we were talking)*
3. *Could you tell us about your education path before college? (We didn't ask this because she answered that question while we were talking)*

Education and Studies in China

1. *Was Asian Studies your initial major in your undergrad?*
2. *Being an American in China; Pros? Cons? Misconceptions? (if you could give us any example)*
3. *Were there any difficulties or challenges with language? Was it easy to communicate or were people not accepting? Any challenges you faced in China?*

4. *What graduate school did she go to?*
5. *Did you study economics in China?*
6. *Seeing how you study economics, in your opinion what is your biggest issues concerning the economy in China? (Past and Present)*
7. *How does it affect women in China?*

Career Path and Reflections

1. *How would you describe your responsibilities as director for SAIS China?*
2. *Who would you consider your role model in sense to women in general, in Asia and/or US?*
3. *What advice would you give someone who is pursuing your field of study?*

SECTION THREE

Did you get complete answers to your questions?

Yes. majority of Madelyn Ross's answers were packed with background information that gave us the big picture. Yet, constantly, after all was said she would conclude her statement with a clear answer to our question. Some questions that we hoped to get more information from some specific questions but instead were given a general answer. Instead of moving on, we would ask the question again hoping to get an opposing idea. This mainly occurred during the second part of the interview when we wanted to know about her experiences in China.

Was your interview structured, unstructured, or mixed?

Our interview was a mix of structured and unstructured. We split the interview into three parts concerning Madelyn Ross's life experiences and her opinions about certain topics pertaining to

women and U.S.-Asian relations, especially China, relations. There was a slight order that we wanted to follow, with the first segment revolving around her childhood, the second segment about her education and her studies in China, and third segment which focused on her career path and reflections. The first part of the interview consisted of non-structured questions that jumped between asking about the person that influenced her significantly as a child to asking her to describe the relationship between China and the United States. Similarly, the first segment and the second segment of the interview were not in any specific order. Instead, it was very unstructured because some questions asked during this part lead us on a tangent. From any tangent, we would ask follow up questions that were not under our list of questions.

What probing questions did you use?

The probing questions we a bit difficult to create when we tried sticking to the format given in the PowerPoint provided on Blackboard. This was because it seemed like the probing questions described in the document were centered around first, getting a response from the interviewee and then following up with a probing question. Creating the probing questions became a lot easier after we read the slide notes that better explained this style of questions. We asked her if she had experiences with any misconceptions of the Chinese people that were proven wrong while she was in China. In her answer, she told that she knew that China had been a difficult place to live during the cultural revolution but didn't know the personal feelings of the people living there. She then explained how she learned more about the sufferings and emotions of the people because of her experience in Fudan University. This question allowed us to get more information about the cultural shock she experienced, saying "I got to Shanghai and it was like

going into a time capsule”. Some more probing questions were, how does the economy of China affect women in China and how she felt after fighting for a certain cause.

Explain your team approach. That is, who did what?

Our team is very dynamic and impromptu. This helps us get out of tough situations quickly but at the same time makes us run into more tough situations that could be eased with better planning.

This characteristic affected our approach. From sending Madelyn Ross the very first email to concluding the skype call, our main goal was to keep Madelyn Ross comfortable with us. This is significantly shown in the beginning of our interview where we ask her about her day, aiming to break any “ice” or tenseness between us. The question making responsibility was divided between both of us evenly. For the interview, Denisse oversaw asking the childhood questions while Ayodele oversaw asking the education and her studies in China questions. However, during the interview we decided to take turns asking questions.

Did the interviewee give you any documents or references to articles to read, or did she mention other people for you to talk to (or research)?

No, she didn’t give us any documents or references to read. However, she did mention Ding Ling’s name while giving us her background information before getting to her point which we greatly appreciated her doing. In the final part of the interview Madelyn Ross made a very admirable statement that we took as great advice. When we asked her about what advice she would give a person pursuing the same field as her, she said, “Having an open mind towards seeing all sides of a problem is important. Go see the world and get to know how other people live. Put in the time to learn the language”.

SECTION FOUR

Interview Notes:

- Ice Breaker
 - How was your day? Ask about weather
 - Introduce ourselves and tell her about our majors
 - Told her our undergraduate year

Childhood

- High school student around the 1970s→ graduate in 1975
- 15 years old when President Nixon went to China
 - (Huge impression and her smiling)
- Loves to study language→ took French and Spanish in high school
- Didn't learn Mandarin in High School since they didn't offer it
- Grandfather born in Russia influenced her interest in China
 - Disenchanted with Russia
 - Became more interested in China version of communism
- Only applied to colleges who offered Chinese→Princeton had the best Chinese program
- Perry Link was her first Chinese Professor she ever had
 - He was a non-Asian person who spoke fluent Chinese
 - Found him very inspiring
- Very interested in American studies (Latin America)
 - Especially Brazil
- Loved learning the language

Education and her studies in China

- In the summer of her Junior year, she went to Taiwan to study Chinese
 - Couldn't go to China since there was no normalized relation between us-china
- Senior year, wrote her thesis of Ding Ling
 - Ding Ling was a writer and novelist during the 1930s. Her article was condemned by Mao Zedong because she questioned the party's commitment to change popular attitudes towards women. During the late 1950s anti-writer campaign, she was outspoken and was punished where she was sent down to the country side. She disappeared. During the 1970s, Madelyn became interested in her writing. She even wrote her thesis paper on her. She reemerged by 1979.
- In the middle of her senior year, President Carter normalized relations with China. January 1979
- Applied for Princeton's fellowship called Sachs Scholarship because she wanted to go to China
 - The scholarship is only given to one graduating senior
 - She won it
- She met Ding Ling while she was in China
 - Sounded very excited

- Culture shock:
 - airport small, very dark. Going back to time capsule. Not many cars; only old Russian cars. Very few lights. Bicycle everywhere. Big eye opener
- She was one of the first people on the front line when she visited China
- People in China were warm and welcoming
 - People who weren't living in cities were afraid of foreigners due to the Culture Revolution
 - Many people who didn't speak Mandarin outside of the city
 - Having foreign friends could land you in jail
- Denisse's phone rang (should have put it in silent)
- Between August 1979 to August 1980: the economy in china was finally starting to open to the west. She wanted to understand how the economy work, how international trade and international business worked. She wanted to be part of the US-China economic opening.
- Her phone rang which made Denisse more comfortable
- When she graduated from Columbia, she went to Hong Kong for one year to work in the Bank of America doing economic research on China especially on Chinese provinces.
 - Chinese statistic wasn't reliable back then. She was working with a group providing providential economic so that business people who wanted to go to China learned that if you wanted to trade in light industry places where, what was the agriculture, industry in these different providential economic.
- She asked if we were taking notes.; we forgot to tell her that we were recording her
 - She was very understanding and only said it because she was throwing allot of information to us
- Editor of China Review
 - She was writing stories about the businesses between US-China
- Kept her eyes on us when we were asking her questions
- "Women hold up the sky"
- She sees women as coming from a long way. They are participating in all levels of professional life. One interesting development is the changing attitudes towards marriage. Women used to focus on marrying well and finding a good husband. Now they are putting their careers first.
 - Attitude towards divorce was frowned upon in the past but now it is skyrocketing
- Rushed because she had another commitment to attend.
 - Asked for a copy of Final
 - Asked if we have any more questions we can email her and schedule another chat
 - Super friendly and kind

SECTION FIVE

Your analysis: What aspects of the interview did you find to be particularly meaningful? What aspects were not useful? What more would you like to know? What other in-class presentations did you find particularly useful? Explain

This assignment was, without a doubt, a huge pleasure and joy. Not only were we able to learn about some of the most inspirational and respected women who have an impact on U.S.-Asian relations, this assignment allowed us to experience speaking with one of these women first hand. Interviewing Madelyn Ross opened windows that we wouldn't have opened through just papers. Her ability to remember the events she mentioned in the interview is very remarkable and was very useful for this assignment. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, we had to minimize our interview length and get all that we could with the time we had. She was very cooperative and wonderful to listen to. Professor Christoff mentioned right after our interview asked us if we knew about Madelyn Ross's YouTube channel. We did not know she had a YouTube channel and even after a quick search we could not find it; something we wished we could have asked Madelyn about in the interview. During the in-class presentations we heard about other women and the group's processes. Presenters like Julie/Danielle, who spoke about Jennifer Staats, Matt/Alejandra, who spoke about Hodei Sultan, and many others spoke about women involved in the United States Institute of Peace (USIP). Jennifer Straats was described to be very optimistic and was, ironically, the one who started the interview with Julie/Danielle. the idea of the interviewer becoming the interviewee was very interesting. Many of the presenters said that ,in their interview, the interviewee described issues coming from age and little to none from gender which greatly surprised all of us. We were surprised because after that was said, the interviewee would answer probing questions with answers that clearly described gender inequality.