

## **Dr. Richard Scotch**

### **Professor of Economic, Political, and Policy Sciences at the University of Texas at Dallas**

*Interview conducted by*

*Laura Cohen*

*On March 15, 2018 in Dallas, Texas*

Disability Studies Minor

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### **Biography**

Dr. Richard Scotch was born in 1951 in Chicago, Illinois. He earned his BA from the University of Chicago, and his MA and PhD from Harvard University in sociology. Dr. Scotch joined the faculty at the University of Texas at Dallas in 1983 where he is currently a professor in the School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences. He has published numerous books and articles including the first book on the history of disability rights, *From Good Will to Civil Rights* (1984). Dr. Scotch also served in many professional organizations including the Society for Disability Studies where he served as President from 1994-1995. Throughout his lifetime, Dr. Scotch has been involved in many social and political movements. His vast work in sociology and disability history has earned him many accolades and awards.

### **Topics discussed**

- Background and Early Political Involvement
- Undergraduate work in Chicago
- Graduate work at Harvard University
- Work with the Division for Children in Virginia
- Dissertation Work
- Congressional Science Fellowship
- Hired at the University of Texas at Dallas
- Manuscript work for book on disability history

## **Cohen**

This is Laura Cohen interviewing Dr. Richard Scotch for the UT Arlington Texas Disability Oral History Project. Today's date is Thursday, March 15, 2018, and I'm at the University of Texas at Dallas. I am here today to talk with Dr. Scotch about his work in disability history.

Thank you for participating in the university's oral history program. I just want to get started, um, talking to you about your childhood before we dive in to all your work that you've done in disability history. So, if you could just tell us where you're from, where you grew up.

## **Scotch**

<topic>Background and Early Political Involvement</topic>

Well, I was born in Chicago, Illinois. My parents, my father was a social worker and my mother was an artist, and then [a] therapist later. We lived, uh, for about 11 years in the Chicago area. We started in the area where my father had his first job, and then we moved to the area of Hyde Park when I was one, and then moved out to the suburbs when I was six. And we were there until I was eleven. And, uh, we then moved to Montreal where--my father had run a summer camp for kids in Chicago for the Jewish community center--and he was recruited to go up to Montreal, Canada to create a similar camp up there. And, I think, what was relevant about these camps, my parents were both very progressive politically, and uh, so I can remember learning a lot of songs and hearing stories about the Civil Rights Movement and about other social movements as a child. In fact, in Montreal, we, uh, we were involved in some very minor kinds of activities supporting the Civil Rights Movement. So I went to my first demonstration when I was thirteen, drank my first cup of coffee when I was thirteen. It was very cold. It was on the, there was a park on the top of a mountain, at the same time the Selma Marches were going on in Alabama, which I just saw a depiction of in *The Great Society* play that they are doing at Dallas Theatre Center this month.

And then, uh, when I was fourteen my family moved back to the US. My dad enrolled in doctoral studies at the Florence Heller School at Brandeis University. And a lot of the people who were involved in the Great Society and the anti-poverty programs were, uh, went through that program. And, uh, so I graduated high school in 1968 and he graduated with his PhD. I graduated in '69 and he graduated with his PhD the same year, in '69. So he, and my mother, and my younger sister moved down to Richmond, Virginia, and I went off to college at the University of Chicago.

## **Cohen**

Very cool. Oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

## **Scotch**

No, that's...

## **Cohen**

You said that (clears throat), excuse me, you were involved in minor demonstrations at age thirteen. What were those minor, what was the a...?

**Scotch**

Oh, this was in support of the, uh, Civil Rights Demonstrations down in the American South. My father, a friend of my father had, uh, was doing community organization work within the African American community and--I guess they were Canadian Africans, I mean they were Americans who had moved to Canada, whose family had to some extent, during slave days--so this colleague of my father organized a civil rights march in support of the march in Selma, Alabama, where there was a voting rights movement going on there that ultimately was successful after a lot of violence and, uh, frustration. There was nothing bad that happened in Montreal, but it was.... All I remember was being in this march in a park, and it was very cold.

**Cohen**

Yes, I bet.

**Scotch**

Cause it was the middle of February.

**Cohen**

Yeah. So other than it being cold, what else do you remember? I mean, being thirteen and being, and getting to be a part of that, I can imagine was, was pretty cool.

**Scotch**

Well it was very exciting. Yeah.

**Cohen**

Yeah.

**Scotch**

Yeah. And it was the first political demonstration by African Americans, or by people of African descent, in Montreal. Uh, it was not a big community, but they were...that was the only remotely political thing...I guess we, my father, another colleague of my father, who was a social work professor, ran for Parliament there and so I also helped out on the political campaign.

**Cohen**

That's cool.

**Scotch**

Even though we were so called "landed immigrants." So we were official immigrants, but not citizens of Canada at the time.

**Cohen**

Mmhmm, yeah, whose political campaign was it?

**Scotch**

His name was Charles Gifford. He was a member of the, what was called the New Democratic Party, which was a socialist party in Canada. And, uh, he ran against a fellow named Trudeau, who was not the current Prime Minister, but the father of the current Prime Minister, who was elected from the district in Montreal.

**Cohen**

Very cool. Around what year was this?

**Scotch**

This would have been in 1964...yeah.

**Cohen**

'64?

**Scotch**

'64. Maybe it was '65. I guess it was the.... Maybe it was in '65. I don't remember exactly when the election was.

**Cohen**

That's ok. Very cool. What did you do for the campaign?

**Scotch**

Oh, I think I just helped out in the office, stuffing envelopes or something. I don't remember. I don't have a very clear memory of that.

**Cohen**

Yeah. No, that's ok. That's fascinating.

**Scotch**

But I was, I don't know if you've heard the phrase, but I was what you'd call a Red Diaper Baby in that, uh, my parents had been involved in a number of progressive causes as they were young adults. And so I was brought up with very liberal politics.

**Cohen**

That's fascinating. To be involved at such a young age, you know, I think most thirteen year olds don't really know that much about politics.

**Scotch**

No, no.

**Cohen**

So, it's fascinating that you were already apart of, you know, demonstrations going on, and helping out with political campaigns. That's all fascinating. Very cool.

**Scotch**

So, when we moved to the States, we lived in a suburb of Boston called Newton, and, uh, this was during, as the war in Vietnam was expanding in 1965. And it was, in a suburb of Boston, a lot of the people, kids I went to high school with had older siblings who were in college in that area, and so we kind of were aware of what was going on with the student movement and the anti-war movement. So I became interested in those movements, and did a lot of reading about the Vietnam War and some of the problems with it. And was involved with some student groups and some protests in the mid-sixties in Boston.

**Cohen**

What, um, what did yall do for the protests? Was it picketing? Did yall do sit-ins?

**Scotch**

Oh no. I wasn't involved with sit-ins. It was picketing and marches. That sort of thing.

**Cohen**

Very cool. And then you, um, started...you did your undergrad at the University of Chicago.

**Scotch**

<topic>Undergraduate work in Chicago</topic>  
Right.

**Cohen**

Where you studied sociology, correct?

**Scotch**

Right.

**Cohen**

So, I guess, why did you decided to attend the University of Chicago and study socialism?

**Scotch**

Um, well, I studied sociology not socialism.

**Cohen**

Sociology excuse me.

**Scotch**

Although I was interested in socialism at the time. Um, I had gone to an experimental high school in Newton, a part of the public system. And it was kind of a do it yourself high school where we designed some of our own courses, and we had a much more kind of egalitarian relationship with the teachers. And, um, but I did well academically in high school, got good test scores. At the time I wanted to go to a university that was diverse and in a big city, and so I applied to a number of colleges including Harvard, and John Hopkins, and Chicago. But, uh, was turned down by the others, but got into the University of Chicago. I also got into the University of Wisconsin, but I chose to go to Chicago which had a very strong academic reputation. It was kind of the nerdy place.

**Cohen**

(laughs)

**Scotch**

It was a lot of people who were very interested in academics and academic pursuits. And it was right in the middle of Chicago, on the south side, which was exciting. And, of course, the year before there had been protests at the Democratic National Convention, and the University of Chicago students had been involved with that. And they had actually gotten kicked out of school.

**Cohen**

Oh, wow.

**Scotch**

Later on, there had been a big sit-in in the President's office, the year before. And so when we arrived, all the first year students got there, and, uh, there was a kind of common core humanities course, and, uh, that combined history and literature. And every, all of the freshman had to write histories of the sit-in that had taken place at the University the year before.

**Cohen**

Really?

**Scotch**

Which was very interesting process because we did interviewing and looked at documents, and it was a real great introduction, one into how the work of history is, historians is done, but also all of the kind of decisions, the choices that are made as you are trying to record things, and what you emphasize and what you don't, and how, uh, sort of interpretation of historical events takes place. So that was pretty interesting as well.

**Cohen**

Wow. What a great opportunity.

**Scotch**

Yeah, yeah. So, um, I graduated in four years, and was active in a number of organizations on campus, and after.... We didn't have to declare a major until our third year, junior year, and so I held off and took courses in a variety of different fields. Decided sociology was the one I wanted to major in, although I enjoyed my history courses a great deal, and we didn't have minors and I took a lot of history courses over the course of my time there. And, uh, graduated in 1973.

**Cohen**

So why sociology?

**Scotch**

Um, well I think I was interested in how social change took place. And while I liked the history courses, sociology seemed more sort of in tune with the times, and it was a very small program as well. One of the reasons it was small was that a lot of the students who had been in the protests the year before I got there had been sociology majors and been kicked out of the university.

**Cohen**

Oh wow.

**Scotch**

So, it was a small major. There were some really good faculty. Although the more senior faculty in the program didn't really want to have anything to do with the undergraduates so I mainly took courses with the assistant professors, but, uh, that was ok.

**Cohen**

Right. When, um, you were an undergrad, did you know you were going to go and get your masters and PhD? Was that something you decided later?

**Scotch**

<topic>Graduate Work at Harvard University</topic>

Well I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do, and for a while I thought about going to social work school because my father had been...And at that time was actually teaching at a social work school...

**Cohen**

Oh, ok.

**Scotch**

...in Virginia. But I decided I really wanted the more academic focus rather than the community practice. I just thought of it as a way of sort of studying larger issues and topics rather than being involved in a kind of one to one relationship with people. And so I applied to I guess about six graduate programs, and was admitted to two of them, and uh--or I was admitted to two of them with financial aid--and decided to go to Harvard in part because my parents had grown up in Boston and to them Harvard was a very highly regarded place. And I knew it would make them proud if I attended there.

**Cohen**

Sure.



**Scotch**

So I was also, got a pretty attractive offer from Princeton, but I decided that my parents would be happy...and I also liked the idea of living in Boston as oppose to living in New Jersey.

**Cohen**

(laughs) Right. Exactly. So, what was Harvard University like in the late 1970s and early eighties when you went there?

**Scotch**

Well I started in 1973.

**Cohen**

Okay.

**Scotch**

And there were a lot of really smart people and a lot of really ambitious people, and some who were both. And, uh, it was...I would say the faculty there were not all that interested in the graduate students, except for the few who were working for them. And, uh, but there were, again I ended up working more with the untenured faculty who were the ones teaching most of the courses. The sociology program had undergone some major changes again just before I got there...And there had been a lot of retirement, so there were some very senior people, people in their sixties who were kind of at the end of their careers, and then a number of younger faculty who were not going to be there very long because no one ever got tenure right of...But most of the faculty in the department had cross...had joint appointments with other programs and so most of them didn't spend much time in sociology, or with sociology students. But one of the consequences was that they gave all the graduate students office space, shared offices...So for the first few years, there was a lot of very close relationships with fellow students, and to some extent we were educating each other...

**Cohen**

Oh, wow.

**Scotch**

...as well as being, learning in the classes. And so we were there all the time, reading and writing papers, and ultimately helping with some of the instruction. So my first year, they wouldn't let us be teaching assistants, but I was in financial need, and so I was able to get a job as a teaching assistant at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] instead of Harvard because they had a course in social psychology and no graduate students in the field, so I taught at a...in the social psychology class at MIT. And I lived with a friend of mine who was a law student at Boston University, who I had known from college, him and his German shepherd...

**Cohen**

(laughs)

**Scotch**

...And after the first year, we moved into an apartment with a couple of medical students in another part of Boston. The Boston area...we had lived in Cambridge near the university, but the medical students were at the Harvard Medical School which was not in Cambridge, and so we were close to where the other, my other roommates were going to school which meant I had to commute. But it was...I made some good friendships though I lost touch with those people since....

...I started out wanting to study, I was interested somewhat in Latin America, but I didn't know Spanish. And I took one course in Latin America, and everybody else in the course was an advanced graduate student and they know a lot, and I was intimidated, so I didn't take any more courses in that. I decided to do something in a field that I didn't have the language barrier.

**Cohen**

Sure.

**Scotch**

So, I started focusing on American society and became interested in the history of education, and the history of work, and the history of the health care system. And I have that historical bent kind of carrying over from my undergraduate work...So got through the first two years, and in my third year, we had a qualifying oral exam, and I passed that. And we also had to write a major theoretical paper, as the other qualifying requirement, and that took me a long time. That took me about a year to finish. And it was--I thought I did a good job—but it was very challenging for me to write something that long, and so by the time I finished that and turned it in, it was the end of my fourth year, and I decided to take a break.

And so I...that fourth year, I had gotten a job as a research assistant in the Harvard...School of Public Health, which is over in the medical area. And did some case studies for a program, an executive program that they were running, which got me more interesting in health policy. And I had taken a health, medical sociology course with a faculty member who I liked, although she left the university after teaching the course. And so I was able in the summer of 1976 to get an internship at what was then the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare [now the Department of Health and Human Services] and spent the summer writing guidelines for community participation and health planning programs. And lived in Washington. And that was the year of the Bicentennial which was a very interesting year to be, time to be in Washington. There was a huge concert on July 4, 1976...

**Cohen**

Wow!

**Scotch**

...downtown in the Mall. And there were a million people there, and the whole transit system broke down, and so we couldn't get buses home...

**Cohen**

Oh my goodness.

**Scotch**

<topic>Work with the Division for Children in Virginia</topic>

...And had to walk several miles to get back to our apartments. But that got me interested in federal health policy, and I went back to school thinking I might do a dissertation in that, after I finished this paper. And when I finished the paper...again I said I thought I would take a break.... At that time my dad was teaching in Richmond, Virginia, and some of his students worked in state government. One of them ran an advocacy program for children that was within the state government. It kind of looked at how various children's services were going. And I had applied for some jobs in Boston, and I had applied for some jobs in Washington D.C., and ultimately decided to take this job in Richmond in the state government working for what was called the Division for Children which was a, kind of looked at all the different, other children's programs. And the reason I bring that up is that one of my major assignments—I was in their evaluation unit, which was just the two of us—was to monitor the implementation of what's now called IDEA, the Individuals with Disability Education Act.

**Cohen**

Oh, okay.

**Scotch**

<topic>Dissertation Work</topic>

Which was at that time called the Education for All Handicap Children Act. So this was one of the first federal civil rights guarantees for people with disabilities. And I didn't know much about the topic, but there wasn't a whole lot of other things for me to do...I had a whole lot of flexibility, and I went to community meetings and tried to talk not just with people in the schools, and people with the other agencies, but also with some of the advocates who were involved with that program. And I met...I met some of the disability advocates, and I was very intrigued by what they were trying to do...Not just from a kind of political standpoint, but also from an academic standpoint. While there are a lot of people with disabilities, most of them don't identify as such in terms of their political identity, and yet the federal government was getting involved in all of these laws that were not the result of a kind of broad mass movement toward advocating for change. And so to me, this kind of raised an academic question, which is, "How are these laws changed? How was it that this group was able to accomplish some of its goals even without a broad political base?" And one of my professors at Harvard, who ultimately left before I started my dissertation, was a woman named Ann Swidler who I considered a mentor. And she is best known for her work about culture, sort of trying to redefine how sociologists thought about culture. And so that kind of brought me to have an interest in the culture of public policy. How culture defines what we see as problems, and what kinds of solutions we adopt to address those problems.

And so after, uh, a couple of years in Virginia--a year and a half working for this agency, and then six months working on a proposal for my doctoral dissertation--I decided to frame that in terms of how this group of disability advocates were able to basically change the cultural assumptions behind federal disability policies, in particular how they shifted from a kind of charity rehabilitation framework to a civil rights framework. What we would now say from a medical model of disability to a social model of disability. How is it that you change the environment to include people with disabilities rather than changing people with disability to have them adapt to the movement...adapt to the society. And so I decided to look at how advocates had tried to influence policy on disability. And wrote my proposal, and went up to Cambridge. I was living in Richmond at the time, and was married...so it was not really, it would not have been easy to move back to Boston and not really necessary. And I went up in the spring and recruited several of the faculty I knew to be on my committee, and then I reenrolled for the fall. And all the people who had agreed to be on my committee had left the university.

**Cohen**

Oh no.

**Scotch**

Which is what happens when you work with assistant professors...You want to work with senior people because they are more permanent. So I had to find new faculty members and was able to, through my social network, identify a potential chair, and he agreed to chair the dissertation. And I went to one of the faculty I had taken a course from at the...Harvard Graduate School of Education, and he agreed to be on the committee. And then one of my friend's husband was on the faculty at the Medical School and knew a lot about disability, so he agreed to do it, so we only had three. So I was able to get my committee together, and they approved my proposal. I was first planning to study three different federal laws, and they very wisely suggested I just do one. And so I chose Section 504 which was the first, more general, civil rights law. It effected anyone who, any organization that received federal funding. It was based on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, public accommodations sections of that law. The law had passed in 1973, and it took three, four years for the regulations to be issued, and so one of the research questions I brought to the dissertation was, "Why did that take so long? And what was the process? And how did it result in some fairly forceful requirements being written into the regulations?" But then once the regulations had been drafted, the department would not release them until there were a series of sit-ins in federal offices in 1977. And so I was interested in how that worked. So it took me about two years. This was, by now we are in 1979, and so the activities that I was studying had happened two, three years earlier, some cases four years earlier. I don't know if a professional historian would count that as history...

**Cohen**

(laughs)

**Scotch**

I guess some would and some wouldn't. (coughs) Excuse me. But, uh, through the people that I had met when I was working for the state of Virginia studying the Special Education program, I was able to identify people to interview. So I looked at first how the law was passed in 1973-4. And then how the regulations were drafted by the bureaucracy, what that process was, which was very interesting because it engaged a number of disability advocacy groups in the process. And then what events led to the

ultimate issue, and so those regulations, the protests, and their aftermath. And so that was the focus of my dissertation. And, uh, I had started the research in late '79, early 1980, and had my proposal approved, and conducted interviews. I was living in Richmond, and I would take a bus or a train up for the day to Washington and go try to interview people, and that was somewhat challenging because a lot of people didn't want to talk to a graduate student. And I would take a two hour bus ride and get there and arrive and find that they were too busy to talk to me, so it took a number of months before I...I interviewed about forty-five people all together. And was able to look at some documents, and was very fortunate...I started doing the interviewing in 1980, prior to the 1980 election, and was able to reach people which was fortunate because the bill had been drafted in the Senate, mostly by staff who worked for a particular Senate subcommittee, and the Senate changed hands after the 1980 election, and so all the people who I interviewed lost their jobs. Almost all of them did, and so they kind of dispersed. So I was fortunate to reach them that summer and fall before a bunch of them left town or changed careers. And then another fortunate thing that happened in my dissertation research was that I...One of the things that happened in 1980 was the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare had split in the last year of the Carter Presidency into the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services, and some of the people went to one side, and some people went to the other side. And I just happened to be interviewing one of the people who had written the regulations that I was interested in. Someone who's still with the federal government now, almost forty years later.

**Cohen**

Oh wow.

**Scotch**

But he said, "Oh yeah, I got a cardboard box in my closet, uh, let's look at that. Here, why don't...you can look through this and just take whatever you want..."

**Cohen**

Oh wow.

**Scotch**

"...and some of it you can't take, but there's a copier down the hall. Just copy whatever you want."

**Cohen**

That's great.

**Scotch**

And so, I got access to a number of documents that were not public. I mean they weren't confidential in any real sense, but they were the records of how they had written these regulations.

**Cohen**

Wow.

**Scotch**

And what was interesting was that because...this guy, whose name was John Wodatch, and his colleagues, they didn't know much about disability, and they were in the Office of Civil Rights.

Let me back up a bit. Turned out to be really important because when this law was passed and sent over to the administration for them to sort of figure out what to do about it--Laws at that time were very short, and Congress would sort of just leave it up to the Executive Branch to figure it out—And it went to whoever it goes to within this Department of Health and Human...Department of HEW then. And they said, Well, who should we send this to? Should we send this to the rehabilitation councilors and the rehabilitation services agency? Well, no, this was actually, this particular part of the law was based on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, so we should send it to the Civil Rights Act people. So they sent it to the Office for Civil Rights which was a very outspoken part of the agency and was staffed by, for the most part, civil rights lawyers whose idea...You know, if you think about rehabilitation councilors, their training is to try to get people to communicate and get along with each other, and how can we improve things by educating people and improving their awareness. You know, where the civil rights lawyers, many of whom had been involved with enforcing federal civil rights mandates in the South during the Segregation Era, their approach to change was, well you know, you pass a law and then you sue their asses until they comply.

**Cohen**

(laughs)

**Scotch**

And so, a lot of the stance of Section 504 was much more assertive and emphatic, and much less, uh, conciliatory than the law might have otherwise been. And so it really pushed the people, the organizations that were subject to the law and to complying whether they liked it or not. And not paying a whole lot of attention to the resources that would be required to do things. Because when you have a civil rights law, you don't say, "Well, we're going to desegregate if it doesn't cost too much money." You just say, "Desegregated."

**Cohen**

Right.

**Scotch**

How you pay for it is your problem. And while that was not, that approach was not entirely embodied in the disability civil rights laws because they had language about reasonable accommodations and not having an undue burden. Nevertheless, it was a much stronger approach to how you get compliance, and the regulations were not implemented for several years because of that strong approach.

But going back to where I left off, the way they drafted these was, instead of going to the rehab counseling people in the federal agencies, they did what civil rights lawyers do, they kind of talked to the people who were affected by it. And so, at that time—And I talk about this in my dissertation—there were some national organizations on disability topics led by people with disabilities, and so they were the experts. And they were the ones who helped come up with language and policies to implement this nondiscrimination law. And so, it was a much stronger law that [what] would have been accomplished otherwise.

### **Scotch**

<topic>Congressional Science Fellowship</topic>

So I finished the dissertation in 19...I was almost finished in 1981, but my wife was working as an administrative assistant, and we were...didn't have much money, so I ended up taking some interim teaching jobs that slowed me down a lot, but that allowed us to pay the bills. And so, I ultimately didn't submit it until the late spring of 1982. But it was approved, and I had been on the job market. I didn't get any offers. I had had a few interviews but didn't get any offers. But through this guy who was on my committee, who was the husband of my fellow student—although she had dropped out of the program by now—I found out about this fellowship to work on Capitol Hill for a year. And I applied for that, and it was me and a bunch of developmental psychologists, who were not very good at communicating in the style that was appropriate to being, working in a legislative office. So, I was successful in my interview which required writing up an issue in a two page memo and then presenting it...to a group in no more than ten minutes. And because of my experience working in state government, was actually pretty good at that. And so, I got a job for a year as a Congressional Science Fellow.

### **Cohen**

Oh okay.

### **Scotch**

<topic>Hired at the University of Texas at Dallas</topic>

And I worked for a year in Capitol Hill, and my wife and I moved up to D.C. And I was able to get a placement with a Congressman from Illinois whose name was Paul Simon. And while I wasn't working on disability issues, I was working on other social policy issues, and it also gave me a lot of insight into how Congress worked and how public policy worked. And so after my dissertation had been approved, I had that year, and I was able to...I understand things in a much better way from that inside perspective. And I took the year, I was applying for work for the following year, but I was also able to write a proposal and try to get the manuscript accepted for publication. And so I was very fortunate in getting the book contract around the time I got the job offer from UT Dallas [The University of Texas at Dallas].

### **Cohen**

Oh okay.

### **Scotch**

<topic>Manuscript work for book on disability history</topic>

So I came here in a pretty good position because I started, and I had a contract for a book which often doesn't happen until several years after you graduate and after a lot of work. And I went with Temple

University Press because of this very happy coincidence. They had just started a series...(pulls book from the bookshelf behind him) I'll show you a picture of the guy I'm talking about...

**Cohen**

Sure.

**Scotch**

Because I like to show pictures if you don't mind.

**Cohen**

Oh, no.

**Scotch**

But this man (placing book on table), Irving Zola, was the editor of this series, or coeditor of this series... (flipping through book<sup>1</sup>). I don't remember what the name of that series was, but it was basically a disabilities study series for Temple University Press.

**Cohen**

Oh okay.

**Scotch**

But he and I had come into contact before they accepted my manuscript because I had...Someone I had known at Harvard who was a visiting professor there was--her permanent job was at Temple University in the sociology department—

**Cohen**

Oh okay.

**Scotch**

And she had been contacted by Temple University Press because they had a manuscript written by (holds up book) Zola that was largely a memoir, and he had gone to graduate school at Harvard. And so some of it was a memoir of his kind of coming of age and going to graduate school at Harvard, and some of it was about his own experiences with disability. He was a polio survivor. And so they needed somebody to review the book who knew something about sociology, and knew something about Harvard, and knew

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<sup>1</sup> Zola, Irving Kenneth. *Missing Pieces: A Chronicle of Living with a Disability*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982.



something about disability, and those are sets that don't intersect much. And so even though I was just a newly minted PhD, I got to review his manuscript for the Press.

**Cohen**

Wow.

**Scotch**

At the same time that he was evaluating my manuscript for whether they would, the Press would publish it.

**Cohen**

Oh wow.

**Scotch**

And so happily (laughs) my dissertation was accepted. And his manuscript, actually on my recommendation, they did two books instead of one. They took the Harvard stuff out and put that in a different book. But the main part of the manuscript became this book, *Missing Pieces*, which was his experience.... He had grown up with polio, and it hadn't really effected his academic work that much. Although he had had a lot of experience getting medical treatment, and his whole approach to medical sociology was to look at health care from the perspective of the patient rather than the doctor which was quite unique at that time in the seventies. But this book, called *Missing Pieces*, was an account of...He got a Fulbright [Scholarship] and spent a year in the Netherlands in a place called Het Dorp which was a community they founded for people with disabilities.

**Cohen**

Oh okay.

**Scotch**

So, it was like a little, it was like a village, small city, will all disabled people. It was built accessibly, and people kind of accepted disability. But it was segregated from the rest of the community, and so he, in this book, he writes a lot about both what it was like to be in an accessible place which was great for him--At that time, he was not a wheelchair user, he used crutches and braces—but how easy it was on one hand, but what it was like to be in this kind of segregated place on the other hand.

**Cohen**

Wow.

**Scotch**

So, Zola went on to found the Society for Disability Studies and to start the first journal, *Disability Studies Quarterly*. And many of his students—He was a professor of Brandeis University in the suburbs of Boston which is where my father had gotten his PhD—and many of his students became the leaders of the disabilities studies field in the eighties and nineties.

**Cohen**

Oh okay.

**Scotch**

And so I wasn't his student, but because we had this connection of him reviewing my manuscript and I'm reviewing his manuscript—he also was a slight friend of my uncle who was also an academic—and so we became quite friendly, and he became a mentor to me.

Let me tell you one other story if I'm not going too much.

**Cohen**

Oh, absolutely. No, no, you're fine. We have time. Go ahead.

**Scotch**

Ok. When I had decided on this topic, I was living in Richmond, and I was doing a lot of reading and hadn't begun my interviews yet. But in that summer, which was I guess the summer of 1980, the American Sociological Association had their annual meeting in New York, and so I (coughs) wasn't on the program, but I wanted to, partly just to see some of my friends, but also I met with my dissertation chair and some other people at the meeting, so I took the train up to New York City. And a mutual friend suggested I talk to this other person he knew, a woman named Adrienne Asch, because she had been one of the leaders of...several of the disability advocacy groups that I was interested in studying. And she was also a doctoral student in social sociology at Columbia, so she had that kind of double connection of both knowing academic literature and knowing academia, but also very practical knowledge of disability. She was blind, and so she had experienced a lot of discrimination in her life including being told by a graduate program she had been accepted to it, and then they unaccepted her when they found out she was blind because how could a blind person possibly do psychotherapy.

**Cohen**

Wow.

**Scotch**

But she had also been an investigator for the New York State Civil Rights Office and use to run around New York with her white cane investigating cases of discrimination. She was fearless. She lived in a

rent-controlled apartment on the Upper West side near Columbia. I don't know if you know New York City at all, but it's a really cool part of town.

**Cohen**

Yeah, I've been there once, so...

**Scotch**

But, uh, so I called her up and went...got her permission to interview her.

**Cohen**

(coughs) Excuse me.

**Scotch**

Not a formal interview like this, but you know, to ask her advice about how to do this study. And she proceeded to take two hours telling me that my whole approach was wrong. (laughs) We became very close friends ultimately, but that was kind of interesting. She wasn't so much attaching me as attaching how most sociologists dealt with disability from a very medical standpoint. But we had, we talked for, I don't know, three or four hours, and I learned a great deal from her, and that really kind of changed the way I thought a little bit about disability. But also, she knew people that I wanted to interview, and so that was very helpful.

(pulls books from the bookshelf behind him) This was a book she did at the time.<sup>2</sup>

**Cohen**

Oh okay.

**Scotch**

...Was in the process of editing this special issue of the *Journal of Social Issues* on "Moving Disabilities Beyond 'Stigma.'"<sup>3</sup> Um, so she was kind of able to vouch for me in a sense. I don't know if they talk about this in your oral history class, but it's really helpful to have somebody to vouch for you.

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<sup>2</sup> Fine, Michelle and Adrienne Asch, editors. *Women with Disabilities: Essays in Psychology, Culture, and Politics*.

Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Asch, Adrienne and Michelle Fine, editors. "Moving Disability Beyond 'Stigma.'" *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 44,

no. 1, 1988. The *Journal of Social Issues* is sponsored by The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues.

**Cohen**

Sure.

**Scotch**

People don't want to...there's a lot of trust issues, and they don't want to talk to anybody who they don't have some, hasn't been vetted in some way. I've heard it said that Richard Daley, who had been mayor of Chicago back in that time, once said, "We don't want nobody that nobody sent." Basically, we don't want anybody who hasn't been vouched for. In fact, I had experienced that in my Congressional Fellowship where a lot of these offices didn't want to consider having Fellows work for them, even though we were free, because we were funded by someone else, because they couldn't trust us politically. So having her as a, not exactly a sponsor, but as a supporter helped me.

And so, I interviewed for the job here after I finished the dissertation, and I'd spent the year in Washington. And I was involved with...He had other people, the Congressman that I worked for, had other people doing disability stuff, so I worked on social security reform and some other things. We organized some hearings on civil rights and a hearing on federal research programs. And it was a wonderful year, but it kind of convinced me I didn't want to...that I didn't want to work on Capitol Hill. And so I got back on the academic job market, and came out here and interviewed, and was very taken by UT Dallas, and they liked me enough to offer me a job, and so I came out here. But I had my book contract, and so my book was published a year after I arrived. And then the year the book came out, the fall of 1984, Adrienne, this friend of mine, had been invited to a conference up in Wisconsin on disability and stigma, and she, very helpfully, got them to invite me to come to the conference, and it was just when my book had come out, and so...

(looking through books on bookshelf behind him) Sorry, I just love to show and tell.

**Cohen**

That's okay.

**Scotch**

Anyway, I was able to show people the book. And met some of the...Zola was there, and several other people were there, both academics and some policy people from Washington...So that was really good networking opportunity. And as you will learn if you go on and finish your PhD, luck is a big part of [your] career, and some certain things became sort of hot topics. In 1984, disability policy was a hot topic. Part of it was that the Reagan Administration was trying to cut federal disability programs. They were trying to cut back on SSDI [Social Security Disability Insurance] benefits; they were trying to cut back on special education, the federal mandate for special education. And so, there was a lot of stuff being written, there were conferences, there were special issues of journals. It was just the kind of flavor of the month in social policy. And there I was with this book on a topic nobody had really written about. (pulls book off shelf) There's the original book.

**Cohen**

Oh wow.

**Scotch**

And so meeting people at this conference, and again with Adrienne's invitation, I had attended one of the early meetings of a group that was to become the Society for Disability Studies that just happened to be meeting in El Paso, Texas in the spring of 1985. And Zola was there, and Adrienne was there, but also a number of other people that are now, many of them are retired now, but the people who are the kind of the core group for this group that was to become the Society for Disability Studies. It was a section of, simply called the Western Social Science Association which is why they were meeting in El Paso. This section actually keeps active now, and I'm actually going to their meeting next month down in San Antonio. So that was also an opportunity to get in on the ground floor. So I had the book which helped me get tenure. I met all these people. Adrienne also invited me to write an article in this special issue of the *Journal of Social Issues*. This was forty years after they had published a disability themed special issue in 1948, but...where am I? (shows his article in table of contents)

**Cohen**

Wow. Very cool.

**Scotch**

And that led to another invitation to publish in something called the *Milbank Quarterly*<sup>4</sup> which ran a special issue (pulls journal off shelf) on disability, with Zola, and me, and some other people.

**Cohen**

Very cool.

**Scotch**

So, I became someone who was known to have some things to say about disability policy. And while there was disability studies, a lot of it was at the micro level, not at the kind of larger institutional and policy level, and so that helped me establish my reputation as well.

**Cohen**

Very cool.

**Scotch**

And Irv [Irving] Zola edited this journal, *Disability Studies Quarterly*, which started as a newsletter, but is now an online journal. And we actually physically produced it here at UTD for a while after Irv died in

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<sup>4</sup> Willis, David P., editor. "Disability Policy: Restoring Socioeconomic Independence." *The Milbank Quarterly*, vol.

67, supplement 2, part 2, Cambridge University Press, 1989. *The Milbank Quarterly* is sponsored by the Milbank Memorial Fund.

1994. But I was writing articles for *Disability Studies Quarterly* and publishing in these kinds of special issues, and started work on a second book, but never finished it for some other reasons. But anyway, but that time in my career I got tenure, I was part of this network of people with Society for Disability Studies and *Disability Studies Quarterly*. People who knew Irv Zola, people who knew Adrienne Asch, so anyway...I need to take a break for five minutes.

**Cohen**

Absolutely. Well, I was going to say we can actually conclude the interview here today. I know you have other things to do today. Thank you so much for your time. And then, I'd love to meet with you again and we can dive in more into your book, and these journals, and things like that. So thank you so much for your time.

**Scotch**

Ok. Is that fine?

**Cohen**

Yes. Perfect. Thank you.

*End of Interview*