Welcome back to another episode of Bush School Uncorked. I'm here today with my co-host, Greg Gause, as always.

Although we are not in historic downtown Bryan today.

Yep, we have mixed up our location, and we're recording from The Bush School today. A couple of things to note, this will be our last episode for this season, so for the semester. We're going to take a little bit of a break over the summer and plan a bunch of fun, exciting events for the fall. We'll be updating the Facebook page, and the website as we come up with that information, and we'll be bringing you more events in the fall. So don't lose us. Don't leave us completely behind. We'll be checking back in with you in the fall.

Today we have a very wonderful guest who's agreed to sit and chat with us for a while. It's Professor Dr. Valerie Hudson. She is a professor here at the Bush School with Greg and I. She owns the George H.W. Bush chair and runs the program on women, peace, and security. And we're very honored to have her with us today and looking forward to talking to her about her research. Welcome, Dr. Hudson.

Glad to be here. Thank you.

Yeah, and one of the things that I like to do first as part of the discussion is let you define yourself. So just broadly, if you would, tell the audience or listeners what your interests are and a big picture overview of the type of work you do.

Well, I wear two hats in terms of my career. I started out in the field of foreign policy decision making and I still work in that field today, but somewhere around the mid 90s, I began looking at the relationship between the security of women and the security of their nation states. And so I'm probably, I don't know, I guess I'm known for both of those kinds of research.

Which topic do you spend most of your time on now?

Well, currently, this past semester it's been almost equally split because I finished the book manuscript for a big data analysis project we did for the Defense Department on women, peace and security, but I also did the third edition of my textbook for foreign policy analysis. So I've spent the time 50-50 this semester.

That makes for a busy semester.

It was a ridiculously busy semester.

And we were just mentioning you were doing a lot of traveling and giving talks this semester as well.

Yes, I was the Vice Chancellor's Inaugural Visiting Distinguished Fellow for Australia and the World at the Australian National University in Canberra at the beginning of March, which was an exceptional experience. And then my travels have also taken me to Abu Dhabi and Toronto this semester.

Wow. That's a lot of varied places.

A lot of frequent flyer miles.

Yeah, a lot of time in airplanes. I want to come back to maybe some questions about your new book and manuscript that you have, but before that, one of the things I know you do here at the Bush School is a program on women, peace and security. And so I was wondering if you could tell the listeners a little bit about that program, that you have some outreach, some research and some teaching components and so I just thought it would be interesting for the listeners to hear more about that program.

Absolutely. Women, Peace, and Security is a term that was coined around the turn of the century, in the year 2000, when the UN Security Council actually passed Resolution 1325 that said, duh, "Women are effected by war. Women are effected by conflict and insecurity. So you should include them." For example if there's peace talks, there should be women at the table. If you are reconstructing a society after a conflict, women should be part of the planning, and so forth. So it's the idea that women and national security should not be seen as being on two different planets, but as having an integral connection.

And so we have a curriculum. Our students can actually have a concentration in Women, Peace and Security. There's a special capstone that is devoted to women, peace and security. The client is the State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues. We also have an annual symposium where we bring together luminaries in the field of women, peace and security, not only from Texas, but from around the country and around the world. And then, lastly, we have a research component. We have the woman's stat project and database and six of our Bush School students are involved in any particular year with uploading data to the database, scaling the information and participating in research projects.

What kind of data do you collect? What types of things highlight the relationships between women, peace and security? What does that database look like?

The database itself has over 350 variables. So if you want to know anything about the status of women in a particular country, you just ask us and we can probably tell you. And our coverage is pretty good, from 1995 on. So we have over 20 years worth of data.

We now have information that has disappeared completely from the web and we're the ones who have immortalized that data. So it's really an outstanding contribution.

In terms of particular things that we're looking at now for the data analysis project that we did for the Defense Department, we concentrated on a series of 11 variables that were not very well captured in the existing literature and created some of the actual first ever scales on these 11 aspects.

So, for example, prevalence of patrilocal marriage, no scale existed. We came up with the very first. Those scales are the ones I've been using this semester to write this book.

That's really-

Maybe tell the listeners how you define patrilocal marriage.

Oh, patrilocal marriage is when a newlywed couple goes to live with his family, his extended family, and that's very prevalent in the Middle East, of course. I was in Abu Dhabi recently and, of course, it's very patrilocal there. In fact, the great tribes have these huge compounds where every son and his wife and children are living in an extension of the compound. And then they just keep growing outward to become little mini towns, if you will. It's really interesting.

And some of the tribes actually have their own islands. So they have an entire island for their family. It's really amazing.

That's really cool. So when you ... Over time, looking at these variables of women, peace and security, I think it would be interesting to know what is a 10,000 foot view of the most important variables interacting here? Is it that if we bring women into the discussions, if we have women as representatives at the legislative level, it really helps increase peace and security in the nation? What are some of the strongest findings you've found through this kind of research that you didn't know?

Well, we found that there's a prior step before the representation of women can really have an effect. One of the easiest ways to see this is through what we call the Rwanda Paradox. Because of the genocide in Rwanda, Rwanda now boasts the highest percentage of women in the legislature in the world, something like 63% of the Rwandan legislature is female. And yet, I can assure you, that if you had your choice, you would not want to be a woman in Rwanda because there are still many day-to-day oppressions, some of which are very severe that constrain the lives of Rwandan women.

So it's not simply the legislature, and that's the work that we did for the Defense Department, was digging down to see what the particular mechanisms of subordination were that kept women in a straight jacket. Because what we found was that when you undermine the security of women, you've undermined the security of your entire country.

We did a comprehensive data analysis looking at nine different dimensions of national security, everything from the more conventional conflict, terrorism, governance, to indicators of economic performance, economic [inaudible 00:09:04], environmental preservation, demographic issues, health issues, and so forth and so on. What we found across those nine dimensions is that the strongest, the most significant, the most determinative variable in large and multi-varied analysis was, in fact, how tightly constrained women were within their own homes.

So things like patrilocal marriage. Things like cousin marriage. Things like polygyny. Things like inheritance rights and property rights. All of these things work together ... divorce laws, family laws, person status laws ... to keep women in a very subordinate position within their households and that has cascading effects outward for the entire society.

So the more the policies within a country oppress women and their opportunities has a detrimental effect in the multi-varied analysis toward just the security of the country.

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Not only is it when maybe good liberals argue that it's the right, ethical, moral thing to do is to have gender equality, actually from the nation state's own self interest it benefits greatly from being less oppressive or more supportive or more equal across genders.

That's true. In fact, if you wanted to curse your nation, the most effective way to do so is to subordinate the women of that nation. You will have all sorts of negative effects as a result of doing so.

But I want to hasten and say it's not necessarily the policies. Again, look at the Rwanda Paradox, if you look at simply the top level policies, you're not going to see the action. For example, in many nations, women have the equal right to inherit. Well it turns out when you actually look at what's happening on the ground, that's not happening at all. It's not happening at all. So you need measures that actually look, not at just what the law is, but also whether that law is, in fact, enforced on the ground or whether there's a completely different situation that describes the reality.

And that's why it took us four years and a million and a half dollars to actually come up with these measures that would tell us what was really going on.

What do some of those ... How did you go about collecting some of those? That's really fascinating that you have the data from the implementation on the ground, not just a coding of the different policies and whether or not they exist.

So just for my own nerdiness about databases, what method did you use to gather ... Is it through surveys? Is it through measuring different types of outcomes on the ground? What types of things did you end up being able to measure?

Well we did triangulation. As you can imagine, the amount of money the Department of Defense gave us was not enough to do surveys in 176 countries. But what we did do, is we combed the extant literature. We found in-country non-governmental organizations that worked on women's issues. We looked especially for associations of women's lawyers in those countries because they really had a handle on how things actually played out. So custody decisions. There's one thing in the law, right? For example if you look at the law of the United Arab Emirates, they actually have a law that says, you've got to look at the best interest of the child. But you ask an Emirati lawyer, a woman lawyer, what actually happens, you'll get a very, very different picture.

Of course, there's also national reports like every four years the nation has to give a CEDAW report, The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. There are also wonderful transnational NGOs such as Equality Now, Human Rights Watch, that have teams that look at the human rights of women in these countries. So we had a wide variety of sources from which we were able to triangulate what we thought was a good capture of what particular situations for women were like.

I'm interested in another piece of this which is maybe the overall trends for women globally. Over the time that you've been collecting the database, I think you said since 1995, what are the trends for women? Are the trends still positive and that's leading to more security? Is it a mixed picture of regions across the world? Do we have times when women are doing well and then something happens and women are doing more poorly? Could you tell me a little bit about what is the trending situation for women?

Well, it's all of the above. Again, if you wanted to go to that 10,000 foot level, we could say that over the past quarter century, there's been some clear improvement for women.

First of all in primary school enrollment. When we first started collecting the data, women's enrollment as a percentage of men's enrollment in primary school was 60% to 75% in most continents of the world. Now it's virtually 1:1, no matter where you look. So that gap has closed almost completely. I want to nuance that by saying that's enrollment rates. It's not survival rates and the gap now in secondary education is the gap that the international community is working on.

Maternal mortality has plummeted. It's really been amazing. Of course, the nation that's responsible for that plummeting of maternal mortality rates is actually China, which has done an incredible amount of work to reduce its maternal mortality rates, which effects global mortality rates. But even in places like Sub-Saharan Africa, we see some significant, but not as drastic, decreases in maternal mortality.

I think, again, at the 10,000 foot level we see much greater participation of women in national legislatures. Sometimes that's artificially imposed. What's ironic for my students is to realize that the U.S. imposed quotas on Iraq and Afghanistan that we, ourselves, have not even reached in the United States of America, which is kind of funny.

But I think you've also rightly pointed out that there's regress for women. The Arab Spring was no spring for women. It was winter for women. With the possible exception of Tunisia, women's rights have been absolutely devastated in places like Libya and Syria, and other places where these autocrats were overthrown, leaving an anarchy that then brought us back to the old style of organizing a country, which is top men, men, women.

And pets [inaudible 00:16:13]

Yeah and maybe pets underneath that. So yeah, it's really a mixed bag. So one of the things that's really been sad to say is that when democracy advocates suggest that there should be a regime change, they're not thinking about the effects on women, because what we've seen is that regime change leads to stunning regress for women.

So this relationship that we pointed out earlier, which is increase in opportunities for women leads to increase in security for the nation state. So the reverse of that, or the opposite causal story also plays out.

Absolutely.

Where when security is taken away either through regime change or through some type of conflict, things deteriorate for women in those nation states as well. So it goes both ways.

Yeah, absolutely. It goes both ways. What's interesting, of course, if you take a millennial look, and what I mean by millennial is if you take, as your unit of analysis, thousands of years-

Trying to knock on me as being a millennial [inaudible 00:17:19]

Nah, exactly. If we take the point of view from not just 10,000 feet, but from thousands of years, it is absolutely true that those nations which first stabilized, which first moved toward things like democracy and capitalism, such as in Northwestern Europe, all of that which preceded by unprecedented changes in the relationship between men and women within the household unit.

So for example, Northwestern Europe, which was the cradle of democracy and capitalism was also the very first place in all of human history that had post-pubescent marriage rates for girls and that prohibited polygyny and that prohibited female infanticide.

So women's opportunities were a precursor.

So fascinating ... Property rights for women. The church insisted on property rights for women because widows gave their money to the church. So the Catholic Church made this incredible series of changes for women that totally changed their position on the ground. Totally changed the marital relationship from a 14 year old married to a 34 year old, to a 22 year old married to a 24 year old. Households were beginning to practice democracy, partnership, entrepreneurship in a way that they had never had in the entire history of the world.

So from that millennial view, then, we can say that the causal [inaudible 00:18:50], first and foremost is improve the lot of women and then watch and see what happens to your country. You'll have these salutatory changes.

But you're absolutely right, when things go to pot, women are going to suffer disproportionately to men in terms of their rights and status.

It's so interesting that it was essentially a precursor to the enlightenment in some ways and the spread of democracy and capitalism. I did not know that and that's really fascinating.

That's the book, right?

That's the book. It's called The First Political Order: How Sex Shapes Governance and National Security Worldwide.

All right. Well I'll have to read it when it comes out.

You have to, yeah. We just got our first two cover blurbs and one was from Gloria Steinem and the other was from Ambassador Ryan Crocker. So we think it's going to reach a much larger audience than the typical academic audience that we would usually hope to reach.

Yeah, I think Gloria Steinem has a pretty big following and stronger name recognition.

So we talked about some of the clear progress for women. What are some of the challenges that ... We've talked about some regression oppur ... Regression opportunities [crosstalk 00:20:01]

Regression opportunities.

... Regression challenges.

Valerie's work has presented numerous regression opportunities to all sorts of students.

I shouldn't be allowed to speak sometimes.

Stats jokes.

What are some of the places where we're seeing either new barriers or consistent challenges where the progress has really slowed that people should be paying attention to.

All right. Well, we've already talked about the Arab uprising nations. So I think we've covered that. But I think one of the things that most people don't know is that we think that history is bending toward that arc of greater happiness and so forth for everybody, justice for everyone. But consider the following.

When we first started our work in the mid 90s there were five, count them, five nations that had abnormal sex ratios and three of them were Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau. Today we have nineteen. And they're not relegated to Asia. So we have Albania. We have places like Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia. We have a wide variety of nations that are now culling girl inference from the birth population through sex selective abortion. It also involves other nations that you would be like, "What?"

For example, Vietnam now has a worse birth sex ratio than China does.

Really.

Yeah, really.

So you did a lot of work on Chinese demographics back in the 90s, early 2000s. Has the sex ratio in China gotten back toward 50-50 now?

No, no, no, no, no.

No?

Not in the least. But what we have seen is that the velocity of worsening ... There's probably a better term for that ... But it was going up precipitously and what we found is it's slowed, and it's leveling off. But it's leveling off at around 115 boy babies per 100 girl babies.

100 girls, okay.

But we don't expect to see that reduce considerably since, yes, even though the one child policy is gone, the two child policy still does not eliminate sex selection because if the first child is a boy, you will probably be indifferent about the sex of the second child. But if the first child is a girl, oh my gosh, that second child is absolutely, positively going to be a boy. And so that means you're going to get higher than normal sex ratios even with the two child policy.

The Chinese government actually has a statistic that we can't confirm, but since they're the Chinese government, they ought to know better than we. We think there's probably 32 million surplus young males to females in China. The Chinese government is now saying over 50 million. Over 50 million. That's bigger than the entire population of Taiwan.

What's the age range?

This would be the 15 to 44 range.

15 to 44.

Yeah.

That seems bad for security.

Yeah, we're actually, right now, one of my students and I are doing a project on flows of women. You may recall Ross Perot talking about the giant sucking sound of how Mexico was going to take jobs. That's nothing.

I think someone else has taken up that. [crosstalk 00:23:39]

The giant sucking-

More recently than Ross Perot, but yeah, go ahead.

The giant sucking sound that nobody talks about is the giant sucking sound of these immense societies with a huge dearth of women. So the sucking sound of all the women coming to China, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, all the women coming to India, the women coming to Taiwan and other places is a huge mega trend that nobody is looking at.

Where are those cross border movement of women in these societies with abnormal sex ratios, where are they coming from? What are the exporting countries, so to speak.

Wonderful. Our project centers on Taiwan because they have the most available statistics. The Chinese government does not publish these statistics. So for Taiwan, the number one place, of course, is China. So about half of all foreign brides are coming from the mainland.

Language.

But then a fairly close second is Vietnam. Indonesia.

So the brides are coming from the PRC into the Republic of China?

Yeah.

Okay.

And, of course that means that the People's Republic of China is losing more women.

Losing more women.

Vietnam's the worst case. I just told you that their birth sex ratio is now worse than China's, but they're also hemorrhaging women. There's a huge chattel market sending Vietnamese women to these abnormal sex ratio countries like China and like Taiwan. And as a result, Vietnam is actually completely denuding itself of all women. Whether it's at the beginning or at the middle.

So this is literally a mail order bride thing.

Yes, absolutely. Or kidnaps, of course, there's kidnapping, too.

Right, right. And the Vietnamese government encourages this? Does nothing about it?

Does nothing about it which is why we're writing this article which is to try to say, "Have you guys considered what you're doing to your nation?"

That's strange because, I mean, knowing nothing specifically or in depth about Vietnam, one gets the impression that the way Vietnam has moved up the value chain in the world economy is that Vietnamese women have entered the workforce in enormous numbers and yet-

[inaudible 00:26:04] labor, forced participation in Vietnam. It's still a communist country. Hemorrhaging women.

And yet, they're hemorrhaging women.

At the birth time period and also at the young adult time period.

Wow. How about North Korea? One would assume that women would want to get out of there.

Yeah, in fact, one researcher quipped to me that actually North Korea's largest export is women-

Is women.

... to People's Republic of China. However, as you can imagine there's no figures.

Right, right.

We really have no figures, but we know, from people who are on the ground, that this cross border traffic happens.

So it might actually be the case that North Korea is also a country with an abnormal sex ratio population there.

Yeah, we believe it is. We absolutely believe it is but we can't prove it.

So how do we here at home? How does the US compare to other countries in the way we treat women? What does the picture look like for the US relative to some of the other players?

Oh, that's a wonderful question. I get this all the time. There are some who believe that it must be very good. But the problem is we're awash in violence toward women. And so on any scale that we have that looks at levels of violence against women, the US comes out looking pretty bad, actually.

We're not as bad as places like Afghanistan, but we're certainly bad, than say comparable countries in Europe. But I want you to know that there's a basement level, if you will, that we have not found any country in the world, including in Scandinavia, where the rates of violence against women, that is lifetime physical or sexual abuse of women is lower than one in five.

Sweden has one in five and there are some researchers that say that the actual figure is one in four.

So even in Sweden, one in five women, over the course of their lifetime, can expect to be assaulted at least once.

That's right. That's exactly right. And so if that's our very, very best country in the world, that suggests that there's this standing reservoir to bring back all these ancient ills and evils like sex selective abortion, which, ironically, is not illegal in Sweden at all.

So we suggest that violence against women is one of the big factors that has to be countered in order to safeguard against the kind of regression that we've seen in other nations.

So I grew up white male in rural-

I don't know if our podcast listeners would have known that.

... and I grew up in northwest Georgia, in the base of the Appalachia and I remember discovering in college ... So I had no violent acts perpetuated on me, ever, really unless I was engaged in it and some of them myself. And I had a lot of female friends and as you get closer and get more comfortable sharing things, I was shocked. Again this was at my college campus and within a subgroup of people, so I was always curious ... like a good scientist, worried about how well my anecdotal observations generalized but my own assessment of the women that I knew in college were that half had experienced some serious sexual assault. I'm talking to a real meaningful degree. Now a function of some of this is I worked in bars and such that, I think, occurrences were even more common in those situations than others, but I was so shocked at the amount of women I interacted with that had a serious violent encounter that was sexual in nature. And it was just unreal to me.

And they also have very different lives than you do. One of the most interesting things that I do in my class, Women and Nations, which is the foundation course for our concentration, is, especially when I have several men in class, I'll ask them questions like I'll say, "Okay, so it's after hours in the Bush School and for some reason you need to take the elevator and the doors open and there's a guy in there. Do you get in the elevator?" And they're like, "Well sure." And I turn to the girls. And I say, "Would you get in?" Not a single woman would get in that elevator.

And then I ask them so you're going to your car after the sun has set. And they're like, "Yeah, so I go to my car after the sun has set." So I turn to the women and I say, "How do you go to your car?" And they're like, "Well, first I actually look outside to see who's standing outside. I put my keys between my fingers. I open up my cell phone so that if there's an emergency I can quickly dial and then I almost run to my car. I walk as fast as I can. I'm looking all around. I get in the car, I immediately lock all the doors."

It's a totally separate life. It is a completely different life experience and actually one of my students said, "Oh, this is sort of like that famous scene in the Bourne movies." I don't know if you're a fan of Jason Bourne, but there's this scene where he's sitting down in this cafeteria with the German lady that he's picked up and he's like, "I know which of the people at that bar are possibly going to attack me. I know how fast I can run and for how long. I know which car ... " and he's like, "How do I know all that?" And my students are like, "Because you're a woman. You're a woman. You know where the exits are. You know who you have to keep an eye on." You know what's out there in that parking lot. You know how fast you can run. You know how to kick your stilettos off. It's a totally different life and I think what we're missing, I think, is acknowledgement from those who have power in our society that there's this completely kind of life.

We would do things so differently. Our urban planning would be differently, how we arranged our space, even, would be different. Things would be different, I think, if the life experience of women was taken into account.

And you can ... I don't want to belabor the point too far, but you can see it. And once as a male it took me a long time to see it and then, now, to your point, you see it everywhere. In any conversation with a female friend, if you build a trusting relationship, these things come up with some regularity and it's just shocking to me, still, after several years of exposure to this and having a wife and sharing some of these stories with her and some of the stories she's shared with me. The degree to which, to your point, when Greg and I head out to Uncorked to do our recording, we're just talking and talking about the day. I don't once, not one time, think about am I in harm's way. And even as a bartender and the times that I've spent working in that industry, which was such a clear example of some of this, I never felt unsafe working at the bar, even by myself, right?

Amazing. That's absolutely amazing.

It's just completely, this was one of the very clear examples because the female bartenders had to have a male on the payroll-

On staff.

... on staff at that same time whereas I could go and have the bar open and closed by myself. I didn't even think anything about it as being something that I should be worried about. Here is just a clear, within an organization, so clear that the harms for women are so much more intense that they needed another coworker. Whereas when I was there, there wasn't a need for the other coworker.

And you know, there are unforeseen consequences ... Even think of the life of an academic. There are trips that my male students can take and my female students would have to think more than once or twice about. And maybe their parents would have to agree. There's opportunities that are lost in field work because you are a woman and you're not a man.

It's interesting, too, how some of the social pieces play out, particularly with men traditionally being in power and so with a male student, it's much easier to interact with a male professor in an informal setting. Whereas there are barriers and concerns for women to be interacting with males in places of power in those informal settings. Whereas I don't think anything about interacting with a male colleague who's in power. It's just talking and carrying on like I would with other males. It's a completely different interaction. And this plays out ... I learned from friends in my PhD program, female friends when we were going through our PhD program and it was just so stark.

It was like, "Yeah I can go have a beer with such and such professor." And my female colleague is like, "Justin, I can't do that."

That's right.

Oh yeah, you can't.

And think about it, not here at the Bush School, but at my last university our department chair basically would go to the weight room with his buddies on the faculty and that's where the important business of the department was done in the weight room of the gym. Am I supposed to go and lift weights with the boys at the gym? No. I mean, it's just crazy. And they go out on camping trips together. Or they'd have a fantasy football league. All of this sounds really innocuous, and it is on one level. It's innocuous. I don't hold it against them for wanting to fraternize. But think about what it does to the females in the department who cannot be involved in any of those activities.

And so I think we're starting to see that you don't have to be overtly sexist to be exclusionary. You can just be oblivious to how your normal activities would rule out the participation of women.

And it fits with your broader [inaudible 00:36:16] for the program and what the data has found. In my own life, having women in the room makes a difference.

Absolutely.

And so, for example, for me, until I had close women colleagues and close women friends, these things were not part of my world. I wasn't aware of them. So just having women in the room at this micro level is just other examples, additional evidence of how that can lead to more security and better performance and more-

And better decisions. I mean, what's fascinating is I'm not a sociologist, I'm a political scientist, but there's now a large corpus of research that shows that when you have a certain level of participation of women at the table, no matter what table it is, you get a different decision. And what's striking is that people come away from that decision feeling much better about the decision when women have participated and the decision is much less likely to be a zero sum decision where somebody's won and somebody's lost but it tends to be much more communitarian.

And thirdly, risk is handled better. The natural risk aversion of females, which is not genetic, but which comes from a lifetime of dare I even get in the elevator is a complement to the more overconfidence that one often sees from men. So if you want to handle risk well ...

And a fourth thing is that when you have men and women in sizable proportions in your group, they actually come up with more creative solutions to difficult problems because you're harnessing two vastly different life experiences when you do so. So at least on those four levels, if you want to make good decisions, you absolutely need a decent representation of women at the table.

And that's one of the reasons I was really excited to come to the Bush School, because about a third of our faculty are women and that was certainly not the case ... One-tenth of the faculty were women at the university I came from in my department.

We're getting close to, I think, our time here, but let me take it back to the women's status project and the work you're doing. You mentioned earlier, and I just want the listeners to know, you got a really substantial grant from the Department of Defense under the Minerva Project and so a lot of your work on gender and women, peace and security is funded by the United States Department of Defense whose job it is to go out fight these wars. So can you tell us, and the listeners when you go, and you brief these folks who have been funding the research, what kind of questions to they ask? How do they react to the findings? And how have the findings maybe changed something in the public policy realm?

I can't speak to how it's changed things in the Defense Department to be perfectly honest with you. I do know that our research is used quite a bit in places like the State Department and USAID to justify investment in women, not simply as something to promote economic development but as something that can stabilize societies. I know that our work has had that impact.

The Defense ... It's fascinating that you should ask this question and I'd like to make two observations. One is that the Defense Department still does not yet know how to use the research that they paid for through the Minerva Initiative that's done by academics. They're still struggling to figure out how to get the message inside the Pentagon building. To the extent that I've been able to talk to military groups within the Pentagon about our findings, I think most of them are voluntold to come to the briefing and they're like, "Oh some P.C. nonsense about women." And then we start actually getting into our findings and they start waking up. And some of them who have had field experience in Iraq or Afghanistan are like, "I've seen that. I've seen that. When bride price starts going up, I know something's going to happen" because there's going to be so much more grievance and people are going to be searching for money and the Taliban gives hard cash for bride prices, they start to wake up about that.

Talk a little bit about the findings of bride price.

Something I think a lot of Americans don't know if that for about 75% of the people on the planet, you have to actually give money to get married.

Right, this is the reverse of the dowry.

Right. So many people would think of India where it's the bride's family that gives the groom's family money for the marriage to take place.

The traditional dowry that you read about in olden days.

Yeah, old Europe, right. But bride price is far more prevalent. And bride price is where it's actually the groom's family that gives the bride's father a significant amount of money to get married. So if you looked at a map, you would be absolutely surprised how many countries have this bride price tradition. But it acts as a flat tax on the young men of the society because there's a going rate for a bride. So it doesn't matter if you're poor. Doesn't matter if you're rich, if you want a bride, you're going to have to pony up this certain amount of money.

And in some cases it might be ponies.

Or camels.

Camels, yeah.

Or horses, or maybe actually be livestock, but it's a huge amount of money. And what's even worse is that every father is watching every other father, waiting to see how much he got for his girl. And if he got a little more, then they're going to ask even more. And you can see how that price begins to bubble in an inflationary sense and it can bubble irrationally and swiftly.

So around the time of the independence of South Sudan, bride prices went through the roof. They went up 1,200% and so when people say, "Whoa, what happened to South Sudan since it has ..." Well, I can tell you part of the reason is that young men can't get married and so they are looking for any source of income, whether it be from the guerrilla groups, whether it's raiding nearby tribes to get the livestock to marry. It's totally destabilized the society.

That's why places like Saudi Arabia actually attempt to cap bride prices.

UAE does that, too.

UAE does that, too. You can only ask this much. And you can only feed this many people at the wedding. Only 600 instead of 1,600.

6,000 yeah.

So they see how it destabilizes the society. But I think we, in the west, don't know that. So when the Defense Department hears one of the things your commanders in the field need to be tracking is the trajectory of bride price. They're like, "Oh."

In fact, I had someone from Kabul actually email me and said I just read your article. Two months ago one of the local chiefs came to see me and said, "Wedding costs are completely out of hand." And we were like, "Yeah, it's like that in the US, too. It just costs so much money. People want doves." And he's like, "No, you don't understand, wedding costs are totally out of hand in my district." And we were like, "Yeah, okay. Good luck with that." And we didn't get it. She wrote to me and said we didn't understand what he was trying to say but you have now given us a vocabulary to say, this is a security issue. This isn't just an issue of weddings and women and whatever. This is destabilizing our society. So I think we've made some impact there.

I think it's really smart and I guess, impressive, the way that you've tied women's issues to security to get people's attention. I don't know if that was the goal or not, but it's-

That was the goal of the Minerva Project.

It feels like we should be able to just make the ethical argument but from a realist perspective that doesn't always play out and so I like that one of the ways that you brought it back to the realist perspective is to say, look, not only is this potentially a good ethical thing, but it makes the nation state more safe and secure, which is things that nation states care about and people within them care about. They don't care about women, intrinsically always, but they do care about the sustainability and security of their nation state.

I think Greg already knows that I give a presentation in which I ask can you actually be a realist if you don't see these linkages, and the answer is absolutely not. How can you possibly call yourself a realist if you're unwilling to look at the real linkages that we have found?

Yeah, that's great. So we're at about the 45 minute mark. Is there anything related to the program or your work that we didn't get an opportunity to highlight that you would like to share or did we cover it?

I think we covered it. I think we have ... Something I would like to point out is that our Women, Peace and Security program is growing. We have lots of interest. The students have now taken it upon themselves to host events and speakers and film showings and so I think this is a little center of enthusiasm within the Bush School and I know that it helps our students also when they look for jobs.

For example, USAID, you can't even apply for a USAID grant unless you have gender advisors on your staff and you have a gender analysis component of your proposal. So our program prepares our students for those kinds of roles.

I know of at least one student, a former student of mine, as well, who talked glowingly of you and some of your research, [inaudible 00:46:05]-

Oh, yeah, of course.

... who is back in Afghanistan and very ... is arguing the importance of keeping women at the table in the peace process talks right now in Afghanistan. And she's been quite vocal about it and so [crosstalk 00:46:22]

We were very privileged to educate her here at the Bush School.

Weren't we? She was just wonderful.

She's going to do tremendous things for her society.

Thank you so much for coming and talking with us.

Thanks, Valerie.

Yeah.

It's been a lot of fun and we'll have to find an excuse to do it again sometime.

Well, and now we're on hiatus for the summer but we will be planning and coming out hopefully some time in August with a slate of podcast guests for the fall semester of 2019 and we'll be back to downtown Bryan, certainly, at Uncorked and maybe to some other locations. We're going to be discussing that with the folk in the city of Bryan who have expressed an interest to host Bush School Uncorked at various locations.

We're not saying that our friends at downtown Uncorked, that we have any problems with them. We love them, but it will be interesting to see how we can expand the audience through cooperation with the municipal authorities in Bryan.

Yeah, yeah. And thank you so much to those of you that have been listening at home. It's been a lot of fun hosting and getting to talk with some of our colleagues about what they do and talk about some of the interesting things going on at the Bush School and have conversations. It's really a pleasure and a treat to get to do this with some of our time.

So thanks for hosting with me, Greg, and thanks for being our final guest for this first season, Dr. Valerie Hudson. Thank you.

Have a good summer, everybody.

See you in the fall.