Oral history interview with Janet Holland for the Reanimating Data Project

**Linked audio file name: Janet Holland 24.02.20 COMPLETE**

Interview conducted 24th February 2020 in London at the respondent’s home.

Transcribed by Type out transcription services in March 2020 and edited by the respondent and interviewer.

Key:

**I: Interviewer – Ester McGeeney**

R: Respondent – Janet Holland

[]: Content has been added by the respondent to provide further information / context.

**I: One of the first things I wanted to ask you was about you and your career and what you were doing in 1989, so that little bit of backstory about how you came to be a feminist academic or a feminist sociologist.**

R: I always used to feel that feminism found me rather than I found feminism. I always felt that I’d started out as what we used to call a liberal feminist who is interested in finding out the data about women from available statistics to see what their position was. I was like that when I went to LSE [London School of Economics] to do my first degree even. I’ve been taking things from a feminist perspective and seeing myself as like a feminist. When it was the late seventies, and feminism started becoming strong, I thought this is good. This seems to be the kind of stuff I like. I felt as if I came into it from a feminist perspective in a way, my own development of a feminist perspective. Almost the first thing I had to do when I was doing the degree at LSE, the undergraduate degree, it was years ago as you can imagine?

**I: Was that in sociology?**

R: Early sixties I did a BSc Econ, so economics but it was a sociological specialisation. It was mainly men and I was the only woman often in my classes. There were more women when you had a big lecture, not terribly many. In one session, a guy, our tutor, suggested that I do the essay on how women have obtained their liberation or something in those sort of terms, ‘women are equal now’. I thought you’ve got to be mad. I wrote this very strong thing pulling together all the data I could find in the statistics and everything showing how they certainly weren’t. I was terrified to present it because I hate speaking in public. I find it difficult to speak. I can manage speaking to one person, but speaking in public … I presented it thinking he was going to tear it to pieces. He thought it was absolutely right. Maybe he was a feminist. It was quite interesting.

**I: What did you do after your degree?**

R: There was friend of mine who was a psychologist, trained with Piaget [Gella Skouras/Varnava]. She wanted to do an intervention programme for young children based on Piaget and development … she had a contact who, in fact, was my ex-tutor. He was my tutor at LSE, and he had gone to work for the … what’s it called? … ILEA [Inner London Education Authority] or something like that. There was a statistical department in County Hall. He wanted a little project. He was pleased that she came along, a psychologist wanting to do this intervention project, so we did it. We worked in one primary school and I think we did two terms in the primary school where we presented this programme. We had this little programme. For comparison purposes we had a psychologist produce a programme as a control, a psychological one which was based on an American programme teaching people how to read. It was supposed to be developing their skills. We just developed this programme ourselves around Piaget’s ideas and presented it to the children.

We spent a lot of time there. We weren’t there the whole week, but we were there for several days. It was in an incredibly deprived school, I can’t even tell you. They didn’t tell us the circumstances of the children until we finished. They were so awful. The kids themselves were great. We had the whole range of Piagetian skills from a little girl who couldn’t distinguish colours and a boy who was seriously a genius. He could draw a cube in perspective. He would have been five or four and a half. He was incredibly young. Absolutely brilliant and embedded in this working class family. Most of his brothers were in prison. It was like, oh god. Anyway, it was that sort of scene. It was very interesting doing it and doing things on that sort of psychological perspective.

That was the first thing I did. I went to Ghana for a couple of years. I went to the States and then I went to Ghana. I came back and met up with Gella again. Anyway, I have often worked with her, Gella, she was a professor in Greece. Has she changed back to Varnava? That’s her maiden name. She was Skouras when I met her. It was through Gella that I got the job at the Institute of Education with Basil Bernstein, at the Sociological Research Unit. What had happened was all of his team had become Althusserians, and they objected to his [Basil’s] position, philosophical and intellectual position, so they’d all en masse left. There was just Gella, and he said can you find somebody who could do some of this work. She suggested me, so social capital contacts and that kind of stuff, I started working there. I just stayed there. It was the end of a project, I think, and then he suggested we put in a bid for something else. I basically put in a bid for what I wanted to do for my PhD including some of the stuff he wanted to do as well. I used his theory a bit in that. That was quite handy to have a PhD.

**I: What was your PhD in?**

R: Gender and Class I think I called it, something like that. Adolescents’ conception of the division of labour. It started out a bit quantitative. I had a big questionnaire, a very big questionnaire. The way I characterise it now is that it started out, I’ve got this big questionnaire, interviewing young people. What was their age? They’d have been in their teens for very extreme different class experiences in different schools, quite a lot of them in the questionnaire. I can’t remember the exact number now. It must have been coming up for 1,000, a lot. Three or four different schools with comparative class profiles. We did loads of analysis on it, but then I started doing an interpretive analysis of questionnaire data. I was switching over almost to a qualitative perspective although I’d been rather quantitative in the past. That was my turning point.

That was fantastic luck really because Basil was so … at the time I thought I was struggling against him and his theory and everybody said don’t let him take over your mind or something like this. I thought, oh my god, he’s taking over my mind. We had a very good relationship. He was my supervisor as well as working with him. We had a good relationship because I’d worked with him before, so I didn’t come in thinking, oh no, the great god or something like that. We were quite combative about some of the stuff. He’d listened to my arguments and everything. It was feminist of which he’d had nothing. It was about gender which he probably didn’t know what it meant, but he was very good because he learned a lot, I can tell you. I was doing my PhD with him. What was the question you asked me?

**I: It was what you were doing in 1989.**

R: I did all sorts of other research … well, not all sorts. I’ll probably forget loads of projects. I was working with him. I was working on that big project and then I got a project … Lynne Chisholm, she wasn’t that well-known then, but she was doing the project and it was also going to be her PhD. I had finished my PhD by then and I was working with a good buddy Shane Blackman. I was working as Lynne’s assistant or something and she was the director of this project. I had, in fact, known about the project, it was Girls and Occupational Choice, because she came and talked to me while she was getting it together. I gave her the benefit of my great wisdom about girls and their work and feminist perspective and all this stuff. Then she wrote the proposal and I had a look at it. She put it in. She got it. That’s Girls and Occupational Choice which involved developing … again, it was intervention programme to four schools in London we were where we did a programme with the young people. One of the schools was all girls, but the rest were mixed, I think, to introduce them to ideas about gender and hooked around the idea that they don’t have to be a nurse or a teacher or a secretary or whatever. There are other choices you can have.

We were developing it with teachers, and they were supposed to present it, the teachers did mainly present it, but if there was a breakdown and one of the teachers weren’t there one of us might have to present it, which was a little bit scary. That was quite an interesting project. The idea of the purple pamphlets [produced on WRAP], that gave me the idea always of producing as you were going along writing up what you were doing so you weren’t stuck with a load of stuff at the end. We had a working paper series, Girls and Occupation Choice. There were about twelve papers in that.

**I: All of your work was around gender, lots with girls and quite applied or around changing practice?**

R: It was rather practical, especially the occupational choice one because you thought … but they always had this hook that it would have an influence on policy or something like that and get into it. I had never thought about that at the time, about it influencing policy. It was quite a surprise to me when it did. This one I thought was straightforward, just a sociological study of sexuality. That’s what I saw it as. Of course, we had to put in all the AIDS and HIV stuff and write about that as well so that we were seen to have done it.

**I: What was it like being a woman working in academia and you’re from a working class background, aren’t you?**

R: Yeah.

**I: Being a working class woman in academia in the eighties?**

R: There were hardly any working class women in all the contexts that I went into. I don’t know how my accent is now, but I thought I had smoothed it out quite a lot, but people did recognise me as being cockney even if I thought I had smoothed it out a bit. By and large I had quite good relationships with the people immediately around me because they were radical, and they were sociologists and that kind of stuff. You didn’t get … you got sexism, of course, you got it massively, but those were the days. It was more in the seventies, because they were a bit embarrassed by that time as we were going through the eighties. There was still a lot of sexism and there’s still a lot of sexism now.

**I: How did the project come about, The WRAP?**

R: The WRAP?

**I: Yeah.**

R: I was on the Equality of the Sexes Committee of the British Sociological Association and I met Caroline Ramazanoglu there. You stay on these committees for quite a while and you do quite a lot of work. We did quite a lot of work about women and equality in researching women, we wrote a pamphlet, from that committee. Caroline and I got on very well and we both realised we were interested in doing something around sexuality. I had studied young people in all sorts of different ways through all those different things. I left out one that I was doing at the same time as The WRAP which was an ethnography in schools about how gender is produced in schools with a team in Finland. We did parallel studies. Mine was slightly less funded than theirs. This one came about because Caroline and I decided we were interested in sexuality. Caroline knew Sue [Scott], so that’s how I got to know Sue. I can’t remember, but we decided that we would try to write an application for the ESRC because that’s all I knew. I’ve been funded largely by the ESRC throughout my career to date.

We wrote a proposal and it coincided exactly with this programme that they were getting together which was called Behaviour research into HIV/AIDS. There was a lot of stuff that was around gay men because that’s what everybody was really worried about, that it was gay men who were mainly affected. It was more about risk in HIV/AIDS, the whole programme. They had lots of projects on it. It was a terrific programme. The normal thing with the ESRC is you’re not consulted on your application. You put your application in, and they say yes or no. That’s how it is these days. It was quite like that then, but they usually said yes when we put it in because there were fewer people trying to apply for these projects with proposals and everything. We put this one in and they got in touch with us and said we’ve got two projects wanting to look at young women, so could you come together, and we’ll have a meeting and discus it.

It was Sue Lees, she had a group. We had this discussion with them and genuinely the idea was … I can’t remember exactly how theirs differed from ours. We also had at the front of the project or before we would do the qualitative part, questionnaires. We wanted to do a survey, not enormous but quite a large survey followed by this qualitative study, interviews. The thing about the interviews was that they asked for a lot. They didn’t really understand qualitative research so much.

**I: This is the ESRC?**

R: Yes, I’ve got to say, and the people who reviewed your work would say ‘small sample’. It became a lot of people, 150 young women who we interviewed which is ridiculous, but we did it. We were having this discussion with Sue Lees and then they said will you try and work out ways of putting the two proposals together. We had a discussion with them outside of the ESRC and we said that we can’t put it together, it’s really impossible.

**I: Was that because you were trying to do different -**

R: Yeah. I can’t remember exactly what they were trying to do. I knew what we were trying to do, and it didn’t really merge. They said don’t bother about the survey, the ESRC, because we’re going to have big one. This was the large survey.

**I: NATSAL [The National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles]?**

R: Yeah. Unfortunately, that was held up for a while. It was held up by Thatcher for several years. So we dropped that out. I like to, as a way of contextualising the sample, to have a little … I don’t know about little, we did about 500, I think, questionnaires from which we could select the sample that we wanted, the age and all the characteristics which was handy. Also, we could characterise the data etc. We did have a little questionnaire that went out to all these people that we could find in places where we thought we might find young women of the relevant age.

**I: Do you have a copy of the grant application?**

R: I’ve been looking for that. I haven’t been able to find it. I’ll try again. The thing is, all these years and all different computers, compatibility -

**I: And a lot of funding applications.**

R: A lot of funding applications, yeah. It’s the kind of thing that when I’m clearing my room maybe it will fall out of something and I’ll find it. I do remember seeing it recently. When I say recently within about the last ten years or something like that. It is about. I know what we were asking for, I think. I can’t remember the amount of money involved, but I shall probably have some details about that as well. I probably have got that because I used to list what I got money for on my applications for jobs and things like that. Anyway, Sue. Sue Sharpe, did I say that already? She was in Sue Lees’ team. I’d met her before. I knew her and I would like to work with her. I suggested why didn’t she come and work on our team, so she said yes. I can’t remember whether we both put in application or just us and that they decided they wouldn’t bother, the Lees’ team, so we put in our application and they decided to give us the money. I don’t think they altered it a lot. There was some suggestion that we shouldn’t push about the feminism all the time. Not feminism, use gender equality. Just be a little cooler about it or something like that. We didn’t need to have it in there because we could just say what we wanted to do. When I read these, [Purple Pamphlets] you couldn’t miss it.

**I: I’m not sure you did cool it with the feminism, did you? That was because the ERSC was more interested in health risk behaviours and safer sex -**

R: They were. That whole programme was interested in risk behaviour. Risk was one of the things we looked at with people who had sex with a risk of danger. We wrote the pamphlet. We had a little set of questions which were about their HIV/AIDS knowledge and capacity. We had questions about risk and ways in which they might do risky things in their lives. We did all of that which you will have seen in the transcriptions. How we got them, you’ll have a better idea than I have because it was an open free-flowing interview, we just put it in where best we thought we could put it. If you couldn’t get it in it sometimes crashed up against the end and you’d say there’s just a few questions I’d like to ask you about, so we put it there. If it followed naturally on from something we would get it in. It still was a very qualitative approach to the interviews.

**I: Was the project unusual or radical in any way for its time?**

R: It was a bit, I think, yeah. I think that’s why it took off I mean there wasn’t even anything about it. Who had done a feminist study of young women’s sexuality? Only Stevi Jackson, about ten years before us and she wrote this great thing in … what was it called? One of those feminist journals [Spare Rib], about ‘Different decade, shame old shit’.

**I: Yes, I know that one.**

R: Comparing her finding to our findings. We were in the line sort of thing, but that was the only thing. There was a lot of research going on and a lot of research starting up about AIDS and HIV. That had generated a lot of interest in sex and sexuality which there wasn’t a massive amount before. As I said, not so much about young women specifically. ESRC said what about the young men and everything. We said we could do that later. We’re doing the young women now. This is what we’re interested in and this is what we want to show.

**I: Why did that feel important? Why not look at men and women together? Why did it feel important to look at young women?**

R: I suppose we wanted to bring women out of the darkness. Why compare them with men? Let’s see women, what’s happening to them in their sex lives and so on and what experiences do they have and how does this all work out. Often the young women would say to us why don’t you ask the young men, they’re the ones. We did get some money for another year, but not from ESRC who weren’t interested in funding anything on young men at that point when we got to the end of the young women. Leverhulme Trust funded that us for that one because they said why aren’t ESRC doing it, obviously they funded the first bit. We said, well, you know. They said okay, we’ll do it. Leverhulme you do negotiate with them because you send them a small application and then you talk and if they’re interested they get back to you and tell you ways that they might like it. You talk to them about why you’re doing it this way and everything. You never had that with ESRC. It’s only on this big new tranche of work around HIV/AIDS that they did go into that negotiation process, and possibly not with everybody.

**I: Was getting funding as onerous as it is now?**

R: No, nowhere near. It was hard. They’re not going to give it to you. You’ve got to have a good project and everything and you’ve got to write it up well. You’ve got to publish. You had to publish. This is why I have so many publications because you’ve got to prove you did the work and you’ve got an outcome. The publication was always important, but that’s specifically from being a contract researcher. You realise that you have to publish stuff and so you’re oriented towards publishing.

**I: You have to prove that you’ve done the work.**

R: Yeah. You do the final report, but you do … even then it was a requirement that you publish. Not so demanding as it is now. Not so difficult because not so many people were going for projects. It was growing all the time when I started up. I think I got an easy life in the beginning because with Basil Bernstein, he would only have to suggest they give money and they give him one for a project.

**I: What do you need? Yeah.**

R: We did get that quite easily, the first application.

**I: Were you saying when we were chatting before we started recording about the wider context of the focus on gay men at the time and no one even thinking about young women?**

R: No. They didn’t think about women in general as being involved. They thought it was mainly a gay problem. They weren’t too concerned about heterosexual spread. Of course, heterosexual spread was the main thing very soon after that. It got characterised as being the gay plague or whatever. The programme that we were on, opened that up … not just us doing that, but all sorts of different approaches looking at risk in different ways and so forth. I think it was … I’ve lost it again. What was the question?

**I: I suppose it was whether it was unusual to focus on young women in that context of researching AIDS.**

R: I think it might have been. In the context of researching AIDS, definitely. It was the only one. I suppose normally we might have thought of doing young women and young men, why did we not? It was because that’s what we were interested in and we wanted to look at the situation of women via their sexual experiences. As I said, I’ve done all sorts of different ways of looking at young people’s lives and this was just one aspect. I did all the work in school and the schools are riddled with sexuality, but I never actually studied this. That was the way I wanted to go, and they had lots of other studies. They could have asked somebody to do a study on young men if they wanted. Luckily enough, they took our arguments as something.

**I: We started to talk about it before, but I was wondering about the project team and how everyone worked together given you were in different cities, there was no email, there was no Google Drive or shared cloud.**

R: Nothing.

**I: I was wondering how you worked together and -**

R: Telephone. I managed to get, I had to because I was getting a crick in the neck, get earphones which would plug into the telephone line. At the beginning the writing was mainly by me and Caroline. I don’t know if that shows up in things. We did a lot of the writing. We wrote the application, we wrote a lot of the early papers. Sue then came in, Scott.

**I: Would you and Caroline sit together and write?**

R: No. She’d be in Southampton and I would be here [respondent’s home] upstairs. We’d do it all on the phone. We would email stuff to each other.

**I: You did have email?**

R: Not email, we couldn’t do that. We must have posted it. We were writing on the phone discussing what we were going to send. When did email start-up? We definitely couldn’t -

**I: Sue Scott did think that maybe there might have been early email then.**

R: I don’t know that there was.

**I: But Sue Sharpe said she didn’t think that there was.**

R: No. I remember that we worked on the phone a massive amount of time, Caroline and me, and then posted it around to other people so that they could look at it. By and large in the early days it was largely me and Caroline -

**I: You would talk and write at the same time?**

R: I think we would write things and send it to each other and then we’d discuss it over the phone, alter it and make suggestions for changes and so forth. It did get a bit blurry because I’d been in so many research groups. Later ones we did email backwards and forwards all the time. On this one we didn’t because we didn’t have the email.

**I: Was it unusual to work as a collaborative team of five of you?**

R: That was different. That was one of the things that was different. Also our insistence that we were all on a level regardless, the fact we all did everything. Two of us were Readers at the university or whatever, I wasn’t that, but we were very experienced knowledgeable people. Caroline around the teaching side of it, sociology, and me around the research side. Likewise, Sue Scott, had experience about that. The others … how many more are there?

**I: There’s Rachel and Sue Sharpe.**

R: Rachel, it was her first piece of research ever and she was doing her masters alongside it. Up there on her own while we were down here in London, so we could meet more often. In fact, at one point we were all living here. Sue Sharpe, Rachel and I were all living in this house. That was very handy because we could all share information. They kind of kept a joint workroom here where they both came and worked in this room. That kind of proximity is extremely handy. You don’t need email if you’ve got that, you can just exchange a word on the stairs.

**I: How did it work when Rachel and Sue were in Manchester, you were here, and Sue were here, and Caroline was in Southampton? Would you all come together and meet?**

R: Yes, we’d have meetings and that was where we developed our technique of doing a lot of the work in meetings. It would be rather long meetings and that technique goes through all my projects after that.

**I: You would do the work rather than talk about the work?**

R: We’d talk about it, but we’d do. It would be work. It would be discussing what we were going to do, sharing what we had done, reviewing where we were at, this sort of with all sorts of information coming up including at the beginning a little spot where we had to reveal what other things we were doing, which is always a bit scary.

**I: Why was that scary?**

R: Because we were all doing a lot of other things and committed to quite a few things. It was just that it seemed like we were very busy, and we were. I was very busy. I was also on a writing group, an educational writing group, which was also producing and writing pamphlets and things. What else was I doing? Two jobs. Three days on WRAP and two days on drugs projects at Birkbeck College.

**I: In that sense, that is quite similar to academic research cultures now where people have got lots of projects juggling different jobs. Particularly more junior people don’t have secure employment so there is a feeling of research being squeezed a lot that people are squeezing the research in around all the other demands.**

R: We were quite lucky either way. The problem with me was that I was totally dependent on funding from research projects. Sometimes we couldn’t put my salary on one so I would have to have two projects to make a living wage. I was never earning a hell of a lot. It wasn’t so much like it is now because … seeing it from my perspective I was a contract researcher, I was a researcher and that’s what I wanted to be. I didn’t want to teach. That was an issue because at the Institute of Education where I … we did a little bit of teaching there but that was on the PGCE. I used to teach on that, but that was only if it was something I knew a lot about as a researcher. I used to have a group of students who are tutored, but those were my only journeys into teaching. People there would say as a career you can’t just be a researcher, why don’t you do some teaching, teach a methodology course or whatever? I said I’m only taking it away from this guy who already does it. I didn’t like speaking in public, like I said. I avoided that, but it was because I actually wanted to be a researcher.

I think Lynne Chisholm on Girls and Occupational Choice, she was the one that insisted that I give papers. On The WRAP team we gave papers, but we gave them collectively. Two or three of us would give a paper so you were a bit protected. The others were always scared I was going to faint or something, whoever I happened to be doing the talk with.

**I: Why didn’t Caroline do any of the interviews?**

R: She didn’t want to. I don’t know why. She thought she was maybe too old. She wasn’t that old. I am the same age as her. I think she might have been a year older than me or something. Nothing much. I think she didn’t have much experience of it. We all had been doing research and doing interviews. We were experienced interviewers.

**I: What was Caroline’s background?**

R: She was a sociologist. She worked at Goldsmiths College. She saw sexism operating in the academic field. She felt she had to walk a narrow path to stay in a good position to go forward. She wanted to do research, and this was the ideal way for her to do research. We could do that stuff, she could do the thinking, she could do the writing, she could do the analysis. She could all of the things, but she didn’t have to go out and do interviews and that suited her fine. It suited us too because we could call on her experts skills. That’s another thing about being the research team, she read everything, so we didn’t always find out what we needed to know. Sometimes I think then you don’t read it yourself because you’ve got somebody on the team who does that. You’ve got your division of labour in your team. Here are the people who go out and do the interviewing. Here are the people who do the thinking and writing. It wasn’t like that because we always wrote together and we in wrote different pairs or threes as you can see from the authorships of those [Purple Pamphlets].

**I: Of the pamphlets?**

R: The pamphlets, yeah. That was the people who actually worked on it. Sometimes whoever did the most of the work on it they came out as all five of us because what we wanted to say that we were doing at that point and to say that we were doing it as a team. By and large if you see the five names, everybody had an input to it, and it was a statement piece. This project does this kind of work and that’s it.

**I: What do you remember about doing the actual interviews themselves? I suppose I was also wondering if there are any interviews that have stuck with you because you’ve done so many interviews or met through ethnographic work with so many young women in your career. I was wondering if there are women that stick? Are there women you remember?**

R: The very first interview was one that stuck with me because we regarded it as a pilot. We’d worked very hard on getting the questions sorted out. We’d worked very hard on producing the whole way that we were going to do it and we knew what we wanted and what we wanted to ask.

**I: What did that look like? Because you were all interviewing separately and in different cities, did you have a sheet of questions or -**

R: All these meetings that we had, and we also produced a fantastic mass of questions that might be feasible and possible which we could use them as when we were… in doing the interview if we wanted to and it fitted in with where we were going, different ways of asking the same question - this kind of stuff. We used to work out a lot of questions. I think we had a meeting with Danny White about sharing questions and stuff like that. He did do the boys and the girls, males and females.

**I: Have you still got the list of all the questions?**

R: Probably somewhere. When I’m sorting out I can have a look. I can go through everything we’ve got, and I can see if I can find a list of questions. You could get it on a postcard just keywords for the questions.

**I: Like the themes or areas?**

R: Yeah, the type of stuff you wanted to ask. You could have it there so you could just glance at it occasionally because you’d be following where the conversation was taking you, but you could glance down and think oh shit, I haven’t asked the AIDS question or something.

**I: Yeah.**

R: In the end that’s what I used to have, just a prompting sheet.

**I: Sorry, you were saying about your first interview the one that was like a pilot.**

R: It was somewhere in Islington which is where we are which was handy. It was a very nice young woman, very interesting. Her mum worked in the sexual health field. She was very well-informed, massively well-informed. Very responsive and very verbal, fascinating really. During the interview her parents came home and said hello. We were in a room and it was a room where they had to go through to get to the kitchen. Every now and then one of them would walk across and go to the kitchen, the mother or father. We’d shift what we were talking about if necessary because she was very open about her experiences and everything and what was going on at the present time in her personal and sexual life. I felt it was best that we don’t do it in front of the parents. It was quite a complex scenario, but it was a great interview. It was really good. We thought why don’t we just use this, why is this just a pilot? It is the first interview.

Others are sometimes when I just get a flash of people and how they looked. There was one young woman who I interviewed in her bedroom at home. I thought she was very interesting, but she was on the verge of becoming sexually active, but she hadn’t quite got there yet. She was working through what she should do and various things. She was extremely interesting. We had this thing where we could pick out people who looked interesting and we would go back in a year and interview them again. There weren’t very many of them. I think there was probably only thirteen altogether, you’ll know better than me. I went back to her and she had just become sexually active the week before I got there to interview her for the second time. That comparison between the two was great. It was really interesting to talk to her about it and see what she felt and thought about how it had gone. Also, just sitting there in her bedroom and her mum passing by the door. Sometimes you interview in situations where they’re not getting as much privacy as you would like them to have, but we did the best we could to find a space that we could interview.

**I: How did the recruitment or access work in London? I don’t know so much about that.**

R: We had the questionnaires and we put them in all sorts of places. There was a nurses home up the road, and we put them in there. We put them in schools, and we put them in places where they might otherwise … all sorts of places. What came into my head was The Telegraph office because it was The Telegraph office up there but that was for the boys. We put them in there. We’d ask the people if we could just come and talk to their group and give the questions and we did that in schools. Places that would let us go in there, give them the questionnaires. We did it in family planning offices and places like that. Sometimes there we would just say sit there and ask people if they want to fill in a questionnaire, give them the questionnaire and then discuss it with them and take it away. Big time input, but there were several of us doing it.

**I: It wasn’t so much that you had a network of contacts already from different organisations. It was more putting the hours in to go to different places that you thought there might be some -**

R: I don’t think we did have contacts in so many places. Some schools we had contacts in. We got into several schools because we knew the school or, at least, I had contact with the schools before. I think a similar sort of thing, finding organisations where we find young people of the age we wanted. We did the same process with the boys as well. That’s the way it works.

**I: Where did most of the interviews take place? Were lots of them in -**

R: Some people liked to come, especially if they were a Londoner, to the office. You would interview them in the office. I interviewed quite a few of them in my office.

**I: At the Institute of Education?**

R: At the Institute of Education. Home, here, [Respondent’s home] if they were living in Islington. I do remember one young man that was at Acland Burghley [School] and we were trying to find a room, but I used to go in there and camp in a room in a school, just drift by with the kids and then find an empty room and sit in it. We couldn’t find a room, so I said I only live down the road, why don’t you come down there? He was very suspicious, but finally he agreed, and he came down. A few of the boys came down here and the girls as well. We gave them the choice, you can come to my office, you can come home, or I can come to your home, and that I did as well.

**I: I feel like that’s changed somehow that maybe researchers don’t go to young people’s homes and bedrooms so much.**

R: Yeah, probably. It’s extremely interesting. I’ve also done a lot of work on families, and that is really great when you go because you can see their context, you can see what their home is like and everything and they feel more relaxed and comfortable because they’re there. They know where they are. We just offered them all the potential places. They would choose what they wanted. Some of them wanted to come to the university and see what it was like.

**I: What was feminist about the way that you did the interviews?**

R: [pause] What was feminist about it?

**I: I suppose I mean-**

R: I am a feminist -

**I: There was debates at the time about what it meant to do a feminist interview for some people like Ann Oakley and people like that. I just wondered if that was something that you talked about as a team or were conscious of how you did the interviews?**

R: I suppose we were conscious of it because I’d written quite a lot about feminist interviewing. In the same way that we didn’t question exactly what kind of feminism we had, and it would emerge perhaps in your conversations what the things were, but we also felt that it would be done in a feminist way since we were feminists, and this is the way we thought about it. You didn’t have to have it all written down, caring for your … you know. All the things that you do now with the ethics thing, but we felt that we would be doing it anyway because we had care and concern for them. If anything, sometimes it did get a bit as if they wanted help and support and stuff like that. We’d have a whole list of places that we could recommend that they go, family planning especially, where the nearest ones were and the books and things like that and suggesting if they should get help somewhere else. We’re not psychiatrists, therapists, we weren’t any of those things. We thought what we were offering was a normal human ear, even if it happened to be feminist. We were supportive of them and we didn’t insult them or anything like that. We made sure they were okay at the end. And also gave them, they could make contact with us at any time. Some people used to get back.

**I: Did they?**

R: I think probably more with Rachel than with us because she was very much nearer their age.

**I: Yeah, really close.**

R: A little bit older than the oldest ones. I suppose we had all that stuff about it’s for women of women … I can’t remember how it goes now, but there was three things your research had to be if it was feminist. Women had to be at the centre of it, obviously. From the ethics point of view it’s just making sure that they were okay, do no harm and that kind of thing.

**I: You didn’t have to do any formal ethics?**

R: Not in those days you didn’t. We used to discuss that because we used to say we are a bit like detectives. You can go in there and ask them anything, but you do have your own code of practice. The way that you want to speak to them and through the sorts of questions that we were developing and the way that we were working out how we would do it, we knew where we were at in terms of … some people might want to help them a bit more than might be appropriate, become a little bit closer, you just had to work through that. You just had to work out how close. That was the problem in … I’ve written about this in feminist research anyway, the relationship, at that sort of level.

**I: A problem that the boundary could be hard to-**

R: The boundaries, yeah. Hard to keep the boundaries. By and large you knew that you were a researcher and you knew you were doing this piece of research and that you were responsible for producing the stuff. You might feel sometime when somebody is rambling on about something that’s got nothing to do with sexuality or their lives or anything at all that you want to stop them, but you would do it in a very subtle way. Change the topic or move on with another question or something like that. I don’t know whether it sounded subtle when you read the transcripts?

**I: Yeah. I always think it’s like what you were saying before that most of them flow in this way that you’re all just giving them space to talk about themselves that often you can tell in a way they’re not used to having that space. You’re right, every now and then a question will fly in like what is the difference between HIV and AIDS is one of the questions that is asked that must have been on your list because it gets asked a lot. It feels a bit like … because most of the questions aren’t about knowledge at all. It’s like we’re in an interview again and then it flows again.**

R: I remember a psychologist friend of mine who said that she used a style of interviewing where you just had a trigger question at the beginning and then the person more or less went on talking. The topics that you want to talk about, they will talk about. I don’t know how she thought that would work. Anyway, I thought I would try that one time. I did it with a trigger question which was something about … which we did have, we used that in general. If we were going to be talking about relationships or something like that we would open up this kind of relationship, that kind of relationship and then what about sexual relationships, in a more subtle way, of course. I tried it and I asked this question. She did go on talking and she did cover everything that I wanted. I don’t think I even had to throw in the AIDS questions. It was amazing. I couldn’t believe it. It was like this is what we’re interested in. She’s read the things saying what we wanted to talk about and that’s what she wanted to talk about too. It was pretty amazing, but that trigger question was a bit helpful because it starts you off.

**I: Either for you or for the team, how did you manage the difficult stuff in the interviews because there’s lots of discussion of sexual violence or unwanted sex or pressured sex, just difficult sexual and life experiences. I was wondering how that affected you and how you dealt with that?**

R: In the context of the interview, you just try to encompass it somehow and try to support them the best you can. Sue had a terrible one with someone who had been gang raped. I went and picked her up somewhere and I was upset when she was just telling me what the young woman had said. The young woman was definitely a survivor in a big way. Some of those were very difficult for us and some of them were difficult for the young people. If they wanted to talk about it, they would talk about it. If they felt they could talk to you, if you gave them this open sheet, so to speak, open space to come into and speak, then it might have been helpful. Some of them they didn’t have any information about sex. They didn’t know things and they saw us as an opportunity to ask and to find out which was good that they would ask. We also gave them some little sheet where you get all sorts of information and stuff like that where they could find out more if they wanted to about it all, especially contraception because that was a big issue. They had difficulty making sure that they were safe. We were thinking about it then because of the HIV/AIDS in terms of safer sex. It started out being safe sex and then it’s safer sex or whatever. Condoms appeared to be the way. Some of them were already taking the pill and using condoms, so they were really sussed about it all.

**I: There’s a lot of unprotected sex though in the dataset, isn’t there?**

R: There is. There’s a lot of unprotected sex. There’s also unprotected sex from people who have been pregnant. It’s like ‘When I got pregnant I realised I should be doing something about this, but then you get carried away’. There’s a lot of unprotected sex in there and pressured as well. We’ve never asked anything about violence or pressure or anything at all. All of that and the pressure and all that stuff, all the findings came from them. That’s what they wanted to talk about. They had experienced pressure and they were also doubtful like the young woman who said … that was one of the things that we discovered, they didn’t like to name rape. You reading it and me sitting there listening to them saying it, you knew they’d been raped. They didn’t want to say that they’d been raped. They had all reasons why. One time I think I asked straight up, and the woman said because I was there. It was my fault because I was there. I just felt … sorry, all of this built up our interpretation of what sex was like for young people and what kind of pressures they were under and so forth.

I can’t remember the exact numbers now, but all of that violence stuff and abuse and everything just emerged from the data. No question about it all. We did ask the young men questions about it, and they would often say something like I would never, no never. Then they would say a friend of mine … so we did get a bit of information from that.

**I: It’s also hard if a lot of this stuff is unnamed, it’s hard for the young men to say that they’ve done something that they might not be able to name that they’ve done. Even when someone says I’ve never done that, if they don’t see what they’re doing as pressure or rape or coercion then they won’t say that they will.**

R: They wouldn’t recognise it. I suppose the same for the young women that they would feel that it must have been their fault because they were there.

**I: I wanted to ask you about how you did the data analysis. There’s loads of things I’m interested in, but I suppose it’s how you worked. I know you got the interviews transcribed and then it was how did you work with the transcripts individually or in a team. I know Ethnograph was just available then. I suppose it’s what you can remember about how you work with the transcripts.**

R: It was a bit hilarious, Ethnograph, because we discovered later that the maximum number of cases that they thought they would use, it was a very early thing developed by a couple of academics, I think, that 40 was the most they thought it could handle. If we would put it on in the corner, a good thing we had it on those daisy printers which I don’t know if you would know anything about those?

**I: Yeah.**

R: The paper was punched down the sides and it would just come reaming out in a pile like this, large piles of stuff. We did use their method a bit because they did have a method where you could mark-up where they had … I don’t know whether we did it on our own batch but reading a transcript and having a load of categories which we developed ourselves from … we would take various … any way you would do an analyses, read several transcripts and you see what kind of categories are coming up and you start developing the ideas behind what they might mean. Basically, you’re finding the categories that are in the data and then going back and going through reading the data and marking it up. We used to mark it up in pen and pencil on the transcripts. We didn’t use the analysis system inside Ethnograph very much because there was too much. It would have broken or something.

**I: You had too much data for the machine?**

R: Too much data, but what we could do is say we got the whole set there, you could go through and select things out. You could select out sections.

**I: I think I’ve got a couple of examples of ‘condom,’ for example, I think was one. ‘Control’, there’s one, for example. That must be what that sorted output -**

R: Sorted output for the file, yeah, that’s right. That’s what you used to do. You put in and you control one.

**I: To get that you would have gone through and coded the transcripts using Ethnograph?**

R: Yes, so we would. Yeah, we could do quite a lot of different things. We could … the amount of pressure, yeah. We’d have gone through and found out what was in there and then made the categories to pull them out of the data on the Ethnograph. That’s how we would have done that. You can’t get away from going through it and reading this stuff and finding out what’s in there, although we knew we’d asked the questions so that’s the other thing. We did ask those questions so we knew the kind of things they would be talking about, plus we had the questions.

**I: How did it work as a team? Do you have any memory of whether you all read your own transcripts initially or whether you all came together in a meeting and -**

R: No, we didn’t necessarily read our own transcripts. We all read a mixture of our own and other people’s. We might work individually and then come together at the meetings. The meetings would also include a discussion of how the categories were working and whether or not … what we were finding and stuff like that. One of the things that is critical here is we were working at incredibly high speed because of the demand. The people wanted this information. For example, we did one on violence, so we just pulled out all the violent things and then we did condoms, so we pulled out all the condom things. They were taken out of context and then analysed in that sort of way.

**I: Someone must have gone through all the transcripts on Ethnograph and coded them all in order to be able to do that.**

R: Yeah, we did that. We had to code it to put it through.

**I: Would you have done that here because I’m assuming that it’s not like now where you can share one dataset across different computers, you would have had it all on one computer, right?**

R: We did a lot here because I was the person who was here with all the data. Also, all of the administration or most of the administration, everything was here on my machine. We would work on them together. For example, me and Sue [Sharpe] might work on condoms. We would pull out al the condom segments and then we would sit together reading them and thinking about them and you’re deciding what ideas come out and what we’re going to write about it, that kind of way.

**I: You must have been working really fast. The whole project was two years, was it?**

R: Yeah, I know.

**I: You did 150 interviews and wrote however many pamphlets in that time.**

R: I don’t know whether all of them got published in journals, but basically once we’d written the pamphlet we just sent the stuff off to a journal expecting it to come back with suggestions about how we should change it, but by and large they printed it as it was. We were busy.

**I: I don’t know if this is a hard question to answer, but I was wondering how you use theory in analysing the data?**

R: We’re starting from our feminist theory, theories about patriarchy and power in society and all this kind of stuff. We were using it in that way, and I noticed that Caroline had written … or maybe we all wrote it, in the back of the book there’s a bit about analysis and interpretation. I’ll just see if we did it any different from the way I always do it. You kept having to fight of the idea that it was grounded theory because we were using solid feminist theory about the way the society is organised. We were looking through that as a filter, but then we were also looking seriously at what they were saying to see whether we had to alter the filter. We would do a lot of things about interpretation. They say one thing and we hear what they say, and we analyse what they say, but we also know that it’s not reality that they’re saying. They’re talking about their experience and their understanding of their experience as best they can. We interpret that through the feminist theories. For example, if they’re talking about being raped and they obviously don’t think they have been raped or seriously are using that, we can say we hear what they’re saying and then we interpret it through our knowledge of what they’ve said plus our theory which is there’s a lot of pressure on women for sex. We gradually build up the theoretical position.

I always have a difficult time talking about that, but we also developed a lot of individual little bits of theory. These things we have in the back of some of the Purple Pamphlets, [looking at pile of pamphlets] the pressure ones have it. We had this business where we used to do these things [points to diagram].

**I: Visual.**

R: Yeah, so we were drawing -

**I: [Reading] A model of women’s empowerment in relation to sexuality.**

R: Yeah. [Discussing a diagram in the back of a pamphlet.] This would be our theory back here. Experience and intellectual and put both together. If they’ve got empowerment, they’ve either got it … this end is the quotes from the actual kind of things we would put in there. We would make the connection between them with that theoretical framework.

**I: You saw yourselves very much as building, using and contributing to feminist theory about women’s sexuality.**

R: We did, yeah. The other one is probably in … [shows a diagram in a different pamphlet] in there, the other one. Yeah, there’s one. That shows male pressure, social pressure and personal pressure. That’s the pressure and that’s the data that would lead us to draw the conclusion that that one’s pressure.

**I: Where were debates around intersectionality? That phrase was-**

R: It wasn’t around then.

**I: It wasn’t around?**

R: No, it wasn’t around.

**I: How did you use – Because your previous work you’ve done stuff on gender and class and -**

R: We just didn’t have the label. We’d be doing it, the interrelationship between.

**I: How did you work with those other forms of difference when you’re working with the data thinking about class or ethnicity or religion comes out quite a lot in the data.**

R: Yeah, religion.

**I: And place, London and Manchester.**

R: I think we made the decision about what we were doing. Class was obviously a very big thing as far as I was concerned. When we did the book, we decided that because there was so much similarity between the actual experiences of sexuality that young women had, not to define the class so much, but I think we give little tables with their categorisation, different classes, different ages. Class was in there and we could see the class differences and ethnic difference. I did do a whole thing on ethnicity [picks up pamphlet] ‘Sexuality and ethnicity’, for which I got criticised by what’s his name? I’ve forgotten his name now.

**I: What was the criticism whoever he was?**

R: Why didn’t I use the concept of the subject of … what’s her name? It’s a big name. Anyway, it will come back to me. It was in an interview, a job interview. Judith Butler, why didn’t I explicitly use Judith Butler’s … and I’d not thought about that at all, but I had to go back to this interview a couple of times, I think, because I’d had various things. The third time I got a whole big defence of my understanding of the subject by Judith Butler, but it doesn’t come across too well in here probably. It was an interesting question and I ought to have been more aware of it.

**I: What I was wondering was whether it was a practical decision to analytically focus on gender or a more political decision?**

R: It was definitely political.

**I: About wanting to show that women have common experiences across differences?**

R: Yeah.

**I: When I re-read the sexuality and ethnicity one, I suppose I’ve been thinking a lot about ethnicity as we’ve been re-animating the data because most of the young women we’ve been working with are black or Asian young women. Most of the young women, particularly in the Manchester data set, are white women. We’ve been really aware of the ethnic differences. Reading that, you can see differences in women’s cultural background, but the argument that you make is that despite the differences, there are common experiences of being a young woman when it comes to sex. I feel like that’s what you really want people to hear. I was wondering if that was something about what needed to be said or about the politics of the time and what needed to be said about women’s experiences, or if it was that other than this specially funded booklet, you didn’t really have the space to do the analysis.**

R: We didn’t realise that we had enough young women of different ethnic groups. We had wanted to have that category in there. We hadn’t been able to get any access to any … we had long times trying to get into different organisations, Asian women’s associations and black women’s groups and things like that. They put up so many barriers, especially for the Muslim young women that we thought let’s just let the chips fall whether they may. Obviously in Manchester, they didn’t fall with many other ethnicities, young people, but in the London one, we did. That’s where they all came from, the London sample. There was quite a number of them. I just decided that there was sufficient that people do write stuff about … however many I’ve got in here. What I was doing was finding out for myself, was there any difference between what they were saying, or could I see any similarities between them? It just seemed to me that there were quite a lot of similarities. Also, the young women from the ethnic groups often gave very, very good quotes because they were so open. There was one about if a young man sleeps around he’s a stud and a woman is a slut, but it’s a great quote that she gives about that. There’s quite a few of them that have got a very good idea about what’s going on and the double-standard and everything.

I’m having difficulty talking about it because I did what I thought was a similar analysis to what I did on all the others, but I think I could have gone much further with it. Having sex with your socks on and all that kind of stuff, they’re great quotes.

**I: What do you mean by you could have gone further with it?**

R: I could have been more open to the possibilities of difference. There are differences in there, you can see it in there anyway. I think it would have taken more work than I had time for and because we didn’t ask any specific questions, there they were and does it … did I ask about religion? I might have asked about religion sometimes.

**I: Reading the interviews, I’m surprised sometimes reading it how much religion comes up, but it doesn’t tend to be … it sort of emerges through the conversation. One researcher might say are you religious but that’s in relation to something that they’re talking about, often about parents or family, around marriage and virginity, those sorts of things it often comes out of the conversation. I suppose I was interested in how it related to the politics of the time, the decision. Even not thinking about ethnicity, you could look just at white working class women in North Manchester and there’s so much difference in it as well as similarities, so that’s decisions you make about what you want to focus on and how you want to write.**

R: I think it’s how you want to write as well because in the book, I obviously would have liked to talk a lot about class, but you can’t do everything. The way that we constructed it was that we’ll leave out the major divisions. We found lots of differences. You can see lots of differences in the data yourself. We occasionally wrote about them in those sorts of ones. I think sometimes the differentiation when … the sorts of experience that they had. It’s difficult for me because class leaps out at me all the time. I can’t see that it wouldn’t for other people as well, that kind of stuff. It was the same when we were moving onto the other studies that we’ve done. There was a period when class was trying to be written out of the story. Other researches might have been, especially younger ones, might have been less inclined to use class as an analytic thing. For me, it just leaps out of the data. It leaps out of that data and it leaps out of the data that we had in the longitudinal study around young people.

**I: If you were going to analyse the WRAP data again now or if a future researcher, so it wouldn’t have to be you, I was wondering what 30 years of research theory methods has given us that we might … how might we approach it differently now?**

R: Yeah. You could come in at quite a lot of different angles, couldn’t you? It was a very specific time and a very specific moment in feminism as well where in a way you’re trying to move the story on, you’re trying to change it. You’re not trying to add massively to theory, but we had been both at the general level and the specifics of the little theoretical themes that we picked up and used. What you’re really trying to do is get this story out and get this information out. Also, it’s the framework. The specific feminist frameworks that we’re using suggested particular ways of working.

Caroline and I got into a great big struggle with post-modernism. There’s a chapter in the book which started out, I don’t know how long it was, it was enormous, we were fighting our way through it and we finally got it beaten down to something which we could … in the book that we wrote about feminist methodology which, of course, doesn’t exist, it’s just methodology, we had a chapter saying what as feminists we could find useful in post-modernism which didn’t destroy it. The whole Judith Butler thing was about she would say there’s no subject so there’s no women. She wasn’t really saying that. Whenever you read it you can’t see it there. You know how people pick up one little bit, so then she’s destroyed the whole feminist movement. She’s saying you can’t call anybody a woman because there’s no such thing as the subject. She wasn’t really saying that. There is the subject. The subject is affected by all the conditions in which it, the subject, exists and is related to all these different ways of thinking about the subject. A little bit too complicated for our little pamphlets, but there’s a lot of it in the methodology.

**I: Are there any other theories or methods that have come since then that you think will be particularly interesting to use in relation to The WRAP or in that data?**

R: I think some of those theories … I’m not too up on a lot of those theories, but there’s some work by some people that I think is pretty terrific. Some of the feminists have been writing about sexuality and some of that could be taken to it quite easily, I would think. The data might well be there. It’ll show you how the data might be constrained by what we wanted to ask as well, but on the other since it was a free-flowing thing it was also what they wanted to say and what they wanted to tell us about too. You’ve got a lot of openness there in what they say.

**I: Yeah, there’s a lot.**

R: Also, so much of it. As a PhD student you could probably take about two of those things. I think Rachel did take one to do her Master’s degree.

**I: They’re amazing. The data is amazing, really rich interviews. There was a couple more things I want to ask you about, are you alright to keep going?**

R: Yeah.

**I: One of the things that I was really interested in was the purple pamphlets that we keep referring to and the publication and how the idea of publishing in that way came about which, as I think I mentioned earlier, I don’t feel like now when there are studies you don’t get a set of pamphlets that accompanies the study. Maybe you get a set of blogs or something else, but I was wondering where that came from and whether that was common at the time?**

R: It wasn’t that common. It seemed like a very good idea to me at the time to publish as you went along. Getting them in journals took ages to come out and there was heavy demand for the stuff because we would be giving talks all the time as well. People would want to know where can they read about it.

**I: Did you have an audience in mind for these?**

R: Nobody thought anybody was interested in the sexuality of young people and feminism. Feminists might be very interested in them, but the thing it was really Robert’s idea, Robert Albury, my partner, because he wanted to start a little publishing company that cut out the middleman. All the gatekeepers who stop articles getting into the journals, he wanted to publish stuff just the way we wanted to do. At the moment when you’ve done it, it’s fresh, it’s not fully developed etc. Also he was doing that with our … which was a slightly different concept because it was very politically oriented with the work of the Hillcole Group, the other group that I was talking about which was about education. We’ve got a series of pamphlets about education as well, about as many if not more, where we were critiquing the educational policy and experience, especially teacher education. All aspects really. It seemed natural to do something for … the reason they are purple is because we put them into the feminist colours. I don’t know if we were able to put white on there, but that’s why they’re purple.

**I: He did that here at home?**

R: Yeah.

**I: All the printing was done here?**

R: No, we had them printed up. Down the street there used to be a little printing place. The pamphlets were stapled together in the middle. Later we were advised to have an edge because you can put the name of it on the edge.

**I: The spine.**

R: Yeah, the spine. Later on we were putting them on the spine, but these didn’t get it on the spine.

**I: They’re early ones. What was Robert’s role in that? He would do the design and the layout?**

R: Yeah, the layout, everything. We do the typing, but he would do the layout.

**I: Was that unusual, the idea of kind of DIY publishing? Is that how you saw it or was Robert it imagining it as a professional publishing house?**

R: He did see it as a publishing house. We only started off with the pamphlets. The book may have been one of our first books, but we did do some books on education and drugs. We did a book on drugs, I’ve got the book on drugs, with very imaginative covers. He used to like doing imaginative covers. It was a joint activity. Him and me were the publishers. It was his idea because that’s what he wanted to do. It was the gatekeeper business that he didn’t like and the way that the academic field was constrained like that. It was wonderful because they came straight out. As I said, we sent all off to journals … apart from Wimp or Gladiator, I don’t think that got published anywhere, but the rest by and large were published in journals without any change.

**I: That worked really well given you were having to work fast, having Robert here doing it meant it could all happen much more quickly?**

R: Yeah. Everything is on site here. I had time with some of the researchers as well.

**I: Being able to have the IT equipment for Robert to be able to do that, was that quite new at the time?**

R: I think do it yourself publishing was a bit new then. We did it in the Girls and Occupational Choice. We did it fancier on these, I think, after the Girls and Occupational Choice. These look more professional whereas the Girls and Occupational Choice, we just used to do them with, say, red covers we had for them and printed from the computer, not typeset as a proper book, whereas these … it’s probably what’s made them last because they’re little published booklets really.

**I: They all came out really quickly.**

R: Yeah, they did. Look at the date on them?

**I: Then it was ten years before Male in the Head came out. It was 1998 that -**

R: The first edition.

**I: The study was 89 to 90.**

R: And 91 was the young men, so we did the analysis of the young men too. 1998 the first edition, yeah. We didn’t change it in the second edition. It was just a reprint.

**I: So I guess, what happened -**

R: Everybody had their jobs and I had to constantly be running for money. I was lucky to be able to publish this much out of this as I did because we were all working together to get the publications done. Quite often I used to have to run on from a project without doing much in the way of publication. I’d have a couple of articles and that’s it. There’s several projects in my past that could have got a really good book out of them, but there just wasn’t time because you had to keep going. The group thing is critical as well because we could do a lot more with a group. I’ve always worked with a group of researchers. We’ve always done it as a feminist collective right the way through.

**I: Had you always planned to do a book out of that?**

R: Yes, we had wanted to do it. We wanted to do a book, but I think the thing was it was just getting us all down. In the end what we did was we took what we’d written before and we had to integrate it from the findings from the young men. In some cases we might have had to change some of that because we had more input from the young men so we would do a slightly different interpretation. We were taking that up. We would get the ones that they’d got with the young men, the analysis, we would merge the analyses. We could use quite a lot of what we had written already in other articles as well. We’ve loads of articles. It was seriously worked over in the book. The great thing about the book is it was all the different ones of us writing and everybody would change anybody’s stuff. You had to be able to let your stuff go a bit when you do it collectively. The final thing was we came here. We went upstairs and we worked for several days. People stayed here and we sat around the table and put the book together. Exciting days.

**I: How come Sue Scott wasn’t involved in that part of the project?**

R: She had a lot of other things going on and she also had to run around changing her job and moving and everything. When she was up there in Manchester with Rachel, they were working together quite well there. Then there wasn’t so much contact and in doing the book, she did a few of the interviews and she did a little bit of writing on some of these pamphlets, but the book we kind of pulled it together just the four of us. She might have been at a critical moment in her work because she also got very involved with the BSA and that sort of thing. She didn’t push it to come and take part or do things and we didn’t push her. That was the way. We were always in touch and Rachel and she are very good friends and I’m quite a good friend of Sue. We love her, she’s lovely, but she just wasn’t here when we were striving.

**I: Yeah, and a lot of the work was happening here.**

R: Yeah, banging the stuff out. I hope we didn’t do her down or anything. She’s on most of the booklets. She even wrote one with Rachel.

**I: There’s a couple of them, I think. There’s ‘Learning …**

R: Yeah, Rachel Thomson, Sue Scott on Researching sexuality.

**I: Then the other one about :earning about sex.**

R: Learning about sex -

**I: Or social construction … I can’t remember what it’s called.**

R: She’s had her input. Let’s see what’s on condoms. I think she did some work on condoms. She’s on it anyway. She was presumably more available then because that’s when Rachel was up there. Rachel, she went off and got another job at the National Children’s Bureau, so she was working with them for five years which was great from the point of view of pumping out stuff out in the sex education forum but that meant that she wasn’t so available for writing the book. We managed to get it together in the end. It was a very intense period. Also, Caroline and I had completely different times of operating. Caroline used to like to get up at 5:00 in the morning, well, early in the morning, and her head was fresh then. I used to like to get up later and stay late. She’s falling asleep.

**I: And you’re firing on all cylinders.**

R: Yeah.

**I: You said something earlier about how you all had different feminisms but maybe you didn’t tackled that head on, that just came out when you worked together.**

R: We didn’t go on it too hard or anything. People were changing and thinking of feminism differently as we were going along. All sorts of different ideas are coming into it too. Sometimes Caroline and I used to think that we were like old dinosaurs and all the young people have got these new ideas about stuff.

**I: I was wondering what were some of the differences?**

R: One of the things with me was that it was class and gender for me. For some people it wasn’t so much. Time passed. I don’t really know about Sue Sharpe. There’s a lot of class in her books, especially with the mums.

**I: Yeah.**

R: She is interested in it but maybe not so much … a lot of her mothers were people from across the range.

**I: How did MRAP come about then?**

R: That was because young women kept saying to us you’ve got to do young men, you have to do it. We decided we would give it a go and we would use the same questionnaire to get them. We’d ask more or less the same questions and just adjust it slightly, both on the questionnaire and in the interview. We did ask a question about violence because it had come up in the women’s ones. It would be nice to leave it and see if it came up in theirs. It’s a bit of pity but we thought we’ll find out what the other side of the coin is. It’s clear that, as you said before, they might very well not experience it as being rape or recognise what they were doing. I’ve read some horrible books about rape, wonderful books really, where somebody had interviewed all these guys, who had committed extremely violent rape, who can still interpret the encounter with the woman as a normal sexual encounter. Who knows where their heads are at.

We decided that we should do the young men as well. ESRC weren’t interested in funding it, but Leverhulme decided that was good enough and, in fact, you needed it, you should do it. They only funded us for a year. It’s possible that we did The WRAP in two years, but the thing is we went on working on it after long after we’d had the money when we’d all had to be working on other things that we were doing. The same thing with the young men. That’s only 49 of them.

**I: That was you, Sue Sharpe and Tim Rhodes?**

R: Tim Rhodes, yeah. We thought it would be nice to have a young man because … we asked them actually, on the questionnaire which would they prefer? We thought maybe he’d get all the interviews, but they said they didn’t mind, or they preferred women.

**I: Interesting.**

R: I think it’s maybe they feel they can talk to women about that kind of thing because that’s who they would be talking to, like their girlfriends, if they were talking at all about it. They were all in London, so we hadn’t got a comparison.

**I: Did you notice differences between the London and Manchester data in WRAP at the time?**

R: In WRAP? Yeah, I think so. Some of them were very lively. I think that’s a class thing because the London class ones are -

**I: Very lively in the London data?**

R: And in the … now I might be merging it also with our longitudinal study because we’ve got some great stuff from the northern end in a different northern city. Was it? It might have been the same one, who knows. I can’t remember. I think at the time I probably did notice it more, especially when you used to read everybody’s transcripts. Field notes, that’s the other thing. Field notes are absolutely crucial. The field notes running through provide a hell of a lot of information that may not be available from just the transcript…

**I: Did you all write field notes?**

R: Yeah, we all wrote field notes, shorter and longer. I usually dictate mine in the car driving between appointments and then write them up later or write them as soon as I have the time if I was travelling by tube.

**I: You would have a little Dictaphone, would you?**

R: Yeah, a tape recorder that I use for the interviews.

**I: Okay.**

R: Sitting in the car, press it on and do it. That’s a very good idea. You still have to type it so other people can read it, but it’s okay. Also, you can think about it a little bit more when you’re doing that. What put in those field notes was stuff that wasn’t in the interview. If you talked about before and after you’d talk to the young person and you could put all of that. Also, stuff that you don’t get from the sound, the ways they were behaving or the way they looked even. I think we described the way they look.

**I: In that time between WRAP finishing and Male in the Head coming out, that’s almost a decade. The work just carried on. You had a little bit of money to do the men, but you just made it happen around your other jobs and very much centred around here, this house with your, Rachel and Sue Sharpe all being here.**

R: Yeah. Caroline would contribute, of course. She came up when we had our big write-a-thons.

**I: How does it feel now thinking about the transcripts being made publicly available?**

R: I don’t know. I hope they read okay. It’s very exposing of yourselves. I had done some interviews before. It wasn’t that I was totally inexperienced. Rachel, for example, hadn’t done any interviews at all, so we were on a learning curve and about a topic area that we didn’t know because we just wanted to know. We also went to quite a lot of meetings because they had a lot of meetings of the people who were on that big tranche of AIDS money. You could talk to other people who were talking about sexuality but maybe a totally different context, so you got a lot of ideas from discussing with other people and learned a lot more about what was going on.

I’ve not kept up with the sexuality material for a bit now. It seemed to be getting wild. Caroline and I were on this Equality of the Sexes BSA Committee. As a committee, we had to decide on what … somehow or other through some process they generate two topics and teams to work on the BSA annual conference. They used to send it to us on this Committee. As it happened on the equality of the sexes team there were several people that were interested in sexuality. The two topics came up, we looked at them, we read them, and we thought they were crap in one of our meetings. We decided we could do better than that. In fact, we could do better than that right now. We wrote a short description of a potential conference on sexuality which was possibly the groundings of the ones that we then used. You didn’t have to write the whole detailed description of what you were going to do, you just had to say what it was going to be about. It could be about sexuality in general.

You say there was a big gap, the studies of sexuality were coming on apace during that period. We had about 600 people coming there and quite a large number of contributors all doing extremely interesting stuff on sex. Women, men, anything. You name it, it was there. Because they gave it to us we sent our proposal to the BSA. We said we think these two are crap but this one is quite a good one. Also, I have a memory that even at that meeting I said we’ve got to have some key figure in sexuality on this team for doing it. If we can just name that one person and possibly put down one or two of our names here or something, it will look like we’re really together. I knew of Jeffrey [Weeks], but I didn’t know him, so I rang him up and said would he like to be on the team for running the BSA and he said yes. It was great. That [the Conference] happened in 86, I think it was.

The growth in work on sexuality has been massive until then and since then. We wrote about it in the books that we wrote that came out of the BSA conference. We said how it moved from being on the margins, a fringe thing, right into the centre.

**I: Yeah, it’s a big change. Do you feel okay about being exposed in the interviews?**

R: That’s what I’m a bit worried about.

**I: What’s the worry?**

R: My main worry is that I’ll have not really responded to what they wanted to talk about, that I shoot off on one or want to get something in that I hadn’t really done what we were trying to do all the time, which I think we did do quite a lot of the time, put them off or something. It wasn’t that they were a difficult group. Some of them didn’t want to talk much or couldn’t talk much. I remember one young woman, she was a very lovely young Ghanaian, I went to the school and was interviewing two people that day or three maybe, too many. Anyway, she came in, she sat down, and she looked very composed. She looked extremely confident. She started talking a bit and then she got more relaxed with me. At the end she said that she was really nervous, totally nervous and trembling at the beginning. I hadn’t really noticed, but soon as I listened back to the tape, I could hear it in her voice. I think you incompetent clown, why couldn’t you respond to that then? I suppose me just keeping going and talking and asking her things -

**I: Creating space for her.**

R: Yeah.

**I: Did you ever think about going back to the data before or to doing more of a revisit of The WRAP? I was thinking that it was meant to be part of that same programme at Natsal, then Natsal has repeated that every ten years. I suppose I wonder whether you would ever … I know you’re really interested in longitudinal research, I wondered whether that had ever been something -**

R: It had. We wanted to do it. We wanted to do more research. We did get the young men and I also wanted to look a bit further on to couples, that kind of thing. I put in a big proposal for couples which was not accepted, which would have been interesting to do. I’d always hoped that somebody would do it, that somebody would come up and say they want to do The WRAP. It has been done. I’m thinking of the introduction to the book, the second one, we talk about all these ones around the world that have done it. Loads of people finding very similar findings as we found in totally exotic places. That was very interesting, and we tried to get in touch with them. We were quite surprised there had been so much of it.

**I: If in 30 years’ time someone was to come along and find this archive of WRAP interviews on line, is there anything that you feel you want them to know about the time, about the study?**

R: I think a bit of contextualisation about the time because it was so different and hard for people now to imagine what it was like. From the point of view that we’ve been talking about, the work. You didn’t have the access to all of the information that you have now. Nowadays there’s too much noise and it’s very difficult for people to find a space to do anything. It’s a scurry and it’s a rush.

**I: Research you mean?**

R: Yeah. As you were saying before, people don’t have the space to think around it and to take their time to move into it. Let’s face it, nor did we, but it would be good if they did. We did have the chance of going on and interpreting the data and publishing from it which we did a bit, but it was because of the busyness of all of us that we couldn’t do more of that. We could have done little bits that went in at different angles through the data. I was genuinely all the time hoping that somebody would do it again.

**I: Do the study again?**

R: Just a bit later and a bit more up to date and then compare. It’s not happened.

**I: I was wondering about what you think the impact of WRAP has been? I was interested in what the impact of the study was to you personally either in terms of yourself, your relationships, how you thought about genuine sexuality, and also in terms of your own career as well as any wider impact that you feel WRAP had.**

R: One of the handy things was Rachel going to the National Children’s Bureau so that the stuff could also be put straight into policy in sex education, which was really important. These pamphlets as well, they became so popular. We were a success story, the study. Obviously, it’s influenced all of our careers. It’s been very helpful for the careers. We’ve gone on in the same mode always working in the same sort of way somehow.

**I: And with each other a lot. You, Sue Sharpe and Rachel. I didn’t know that - Sue Sharpe was telling me that the other day that she’s worked with you and Rachel pretty much for the rest of her career.**

R: Yeah, she has. Rachel has done those things on motherhood and everything which Sue was very interested in before. I didn’t have anything to do with those. Loads of other stuff that we’ve done and the longitudinal one is an enormous one, and that is another big successful, influential study. We’ve been lucky really. Amazing that we were able to do it working together in that way. It wasn’t really a very supportive role for feminism, especially getting funded to do it. It was lucky for us but very unlucky for anybody who had got HIV/AIDS that that approach came along at that point that they were willing to fund. During Thatcher’s time she stopped the large survey. She didn’t think that this was very important.

**I: Or didn’t understand what you were doing.**

R: No. Didn’t care, whatever.

**I: Was there any impact for you personally in terms of listening to all those conversations with young women either directly as the interviewer or indirectly through the transcripts?**

R: It’s reinforced my feminism, I suppose, because you could see the sticky situations that they were in. You could see all the thing that we argue, the construction of sexuality and the rest of it in the book, The Male in the Head that title was given to me by one of my Finnish colleagues. She said it’s not the man in the bed, it’s the male in the head that you should worry about.

**I: That’s what someone said?**

R: It was one of our Finnish colleagues, yeah [Tuula Gordon]. Ah, Male in the Head, that’s it. That concept has been there a bit. Some people have got this idea of this overseeing consciousness or whatever in their head. Then we found that wonderful Magritte painting of the man all over the woman’s body.

**I: The image on the book?**

R: Yeah, that’s fantastic, isn’t it? I love it. Magritte. [pause] Information wise, as I say, it was new stuff to know. You knew the kind of thing, but you didn’t know the details of how young women lived their lives like that. Obviously, it’s led into a lot of the other work that I’ve done which is very interesting. Young people into exactly what their situations are. More class came out in the later ones. There’s plenty of class in there if you wanted to write it. That bit in the ethnicity one. It has affected me. I don’t know about affect my sex life. Some of them were quite surprised at some of these. We did used to have to … they might not know stuff, so you had to introduce them to it gently. I don’t know if you found any of that?

**I: There’s a definite in one of Rachel’s field notes and interview where she asks a young woman about oral sex and says clearly the young woman had no idea that men could give women oral sex.**

R: I think that was the one that was quite general. They were quite surprised that it could go the other way. They often knew about it.

**I: Quite horrified some of them.**

R: They didn’t want to have anything to do with it at all, female on male. It seemed as if they had restricted sexual practices, but they were young.

**I: Yeah.**

R: That was one of the things that we were looking at sexual practices. There were a couple. There was that one with a fully enlightened young woman who was talking about you can teach them. You could be there all night and then they say the sun is coming up. You didn’t have to have penetrative sex. That used to be a funny thing that I used to say that we all used to be looking for a particular thing in the data that I didn’t think people liked penetrative sex all that much. I thought they preferred petting and that kind of scene or whatever you would call it. Rachel thought they were all desperate to lose their virginity. I don’t know what Sue expected. Each of us had this different thing that we were expecting to find in the data, and we found all of it in the data.

**I: That’s really interesting. I think those are all my questions, Janet.**

R: Good. It was very enjoyable.