

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: What I was going to ask first, Tony, is about, if you can remember like what brought you to the centre and how you ended up in the centre in the first place.

Respondent: I was a school teacher and I realised, very soon after teaching, that this wasn't really what I wanted to be doing.

Interviewer: Where were you teaching?

Respondent: I was teaching in Harlow, Essex. A big comprehensive school and I realised that I was having trouble with discipline, partly because I was partly on the kids' side. So, as a teacher, you can't be with the kids and with the teaching. You have to sort of choose a side and they're going to crucify you if you're in the middle. So, it wasn't for me and I started looking for post graduate work and post graduate courses and it was serendipitous that I ended up at the centre. I first of all applied and got accepted for a sociology of lit degree at Essex but there was no funding and I couldn't go. Then my old English Professor, because I was a teacher of PE and English was my other subject, I wanted to do something around counter cultural writings, poetry, underground poetry, that was the sort of area. I was, kind of, taking back up the English dimension. My old English professor at Loughborough, where I was –

Interviewer: So that's where you did your first degree, Loughborough?

Respondent: That's right. I did a BEd at Loughborough. He said, 'Try the Birmingham Centre. They've got this new centre started up and it sounds as if you're interests in counter cultural literature and poetry would fit with them'. He knew about it and I knew nothing about it so I just went on his advice and I applied and –

Interviewer: Got in.

Respondent: Got in.

Interviewer: What year was that then when you?

Respondent: I started in 1972. September 72.

Interviewer: Okay then. Did you have an interview? Do you remember who interviewed you?

Respondent: I was interviewed by Chas Critcher. Somebody called John, I've forgotten his other name but he left quite quickly after I arrived. [inaudible] I was, kind of, seen by all students so there must have been a member of staff but I've forgotten who it was. Perhaps Michael [Green]. But the students were dominant. It was chaired by a student and I had arrived and I thought, well, as a teacher in those days, you still had to wear a, kind of, suit or tie and jacket so, but I thought, well, I'll risk it with a polo neck. I went into the room and the guy, the chair, gets up and he's got holes in his jeans and so I was terribly overdressed.

Interviewer: Did you, like, I mean, what was your kind of, like, initial impression of the place?

Respondent: Well, given that I was being interviewed by students in torn jeans, I thought it was wonderful, remarkably cool.

Interviewer: Did you, I mean, what was your intellectual baggage? I mean, because you're kind of like, I guess you arrived there by way of your teacher in Loughborough but, I mean, what was your, were you sort of on the left or what was?

[00:03:21]

Respondent: Oh yes. I mean, I'd been reading stuff for myself, you know, I did an education degree so, although it wasn't prescribed, I began reading, partly through, you know, the fact that this was my life, all of those Penguin specials on free schooling and Ivan Illich's Deschooling Society and that kind of thing, Jonathan Kozol, a whole range of books that were very critical about education so, I was, you know, already, although I wasn't in any way active in any political sense, although, actually, that's not fair. I had started going, although I found it tedious, to a sort of Marxist reading group in Harlow ran by a guy, whose name I've forgotten, but you might even remember him, he was a big wheel in Harlow and, I think, I did go to some Marxist reading group but I found it all a bit, sort of, tedious and precious, I don't know, you know, I'd found the same thing much earlier when I was a teenager and kind of interested first in politics and going to, I think I went to one CP meeting or something and I thought, I just felt it was disconnected from the real and from people and where we were at and, again, I suppose, in some cultures, you know, somehow it was all too earnest and so on but not connected. It wasn't popular enough somehow and so I felt alienated from that and the same thing in Harlow when I went to this sort of, I think, probably socialist worker generated Marxist reading group. I kind of knew about that stuff and was interested and flirting but that's about it really.

[Retrospective note from TJ: I've just remembered that this is not quite accurate. In two vacation jobs, one on a building site and one at Tesco's distribution centre in Harlow, I organised a short strike (on the building site) and tried to galvanize the temporary workers at Tescos to do the same. In the event, both were partially successful in that both times a pay-rise followed (and, in the case of Tescos, an invitation to join them as a trainee manager, which I, of course, refused). I was also reading Marcuse, Ronnie Laing, Wilhelm Reich, Timothy Leary among others, influential 'counter cultural' thinkers of the time, as well as 'underground' poetry. All this pre-dated my application to the Centre (which was to do something in this area) although that no doubt added greater focus to it. But, I was doing a lot of late-night reading and note-taking (with a view to trying to write something, I think, even had I not gone to the Centre).

Interviewer: And then, did the centre, did you feel more at ease then in the atmosphere of the centre or?

Respondent: Oh the centre was, I just loved it from the word go because I remember the very first meeting, well, one of the very first, I went into the room and, again, all of those big administrative meetings were ran by students. I looked around the room and there's this cool dude at the back of the room in a denim top and denim jeans, black guy, the only black guy in the room and I didn't know who it was and it was, of course, Stuart, and there he was just saying nothing, calmly at the back of the room, letting the students run the show and I thought how cool that was.

Interviewer: What was the (inaudible 00:06:00) you were doing, was it, you were there for a Master's?

Respondent: When you signed up, you signed up for a PhD. In those days, there was no Master's programme but you had to get a Master's degree in order to go on to the PhD. If that is you were going to get any money. The first year I self funded. I was able to, sort of, I'd recently bought and was able to sell at a quick profit my house in Harlow and that funded the first year. I was a married student with three children by that time. I knew I only had one year with this money and then, who knows where it was going to end. Then they gave me an ESRC grant. Now, to be able to take that ESRC grant, I had to have completed my Master's dissertation, so, I wrote up –

Interviewer: So you finished it which is an unusual thing?

Respondent: I finished the Master's. I didn't finish the PhD. The Master's was, sort of, my kind of writing up of the, you know, the bit about my principal involvement in *PTC* perhaps within a reframed *Policing the Crisis* and making that into a thesis. Yeah, what with that and, you know, producing *Policing and Resistance* and several written papers, published papers by the time we left, I wasn't unhappy with that. I still have a half written PhD in my bottom drawer. Handwritten. You might have it one day.

Interviewer: I was going to ask as well, I mean, I'm kind of interested in the kind of working practices that were taking...how things were actually structured and organised. What are your reflections of, you know, the working meetings?

Respondent: Okay. My first year I was commuting up from Harlow and staying several nights of the week with Chas Critcher at Handsworth with Community Action.

Interviewer: That was the 40 Hall Road project?

Respondent: That's correct. Everything at the centre was structured around the early parts of the work. Maybe the first three days in particular. There was nothing on a Friday for example and probably not on Thursday so I could head off. What I would tend to do was, you know, we would have meetings on Monday, admin meetings and a theory session on either Monday or Tuesday.

[00:08:34]

Interviewer: What were they like? I mean, did you have to (overspeaking).

Respondent: Oh, I thought, again, I didn't speak very much in theory sessions probably for the first year because I thought all these amazingly, you know, well read people who had, you know, read Marx and goodness knows what else and I hadn't, so, I was listening and learning in that first year I felt with the older students, sort of, dominating, you know, Andy Tolson and one or two others, in our year probably Colin Sparks and there were several people who would, you know, seem to know a lot more than I did about all this stuff, the politics and the theory. I listened and learned a lot from those but they were big sessions and we had a reading each week to get through and somebody would lead it with a paper they'd present having, you know, guiding us through the reading sort of thing. Then, when I felt much more involved (because we all had to be) was within the subcultures group, with me, Stuart and John Clarke and Dick Hebdige and Roger Grimshaw

Interviewer: Was that already there when you arrived or was that something you started up?

Respondent: No [it was not already in existence], most of those came with me [in 1972]. John came with me, Dick came with me I think, Brian Roberts who came across from sociology, I don't know quite how he, I think he just was already there, you know, met Stuart in the summer and Stuart had invited him to come across [to the centre]. Roger Grimshaw came with us and there were people...no, I don't know whether....At that point Janice Winship and Jessica Pickard weren't in the subcultures group. They had joined the Policing the Crisis group for a while but, basically, it was an all guys group and mostly people who had arrived then in 1972. There were one or two others who didn't last the course. There, we all sort of, you know, we chose a topic, made a presentation (inaudible 00@10:36) we would, kind of, do the work on that, present it to the rest of the group but, collectively, we were also reading our way through things like American subculture theory and, you know, some of the works which would now be seen as the new deviancy theory and (inaudible 00:10:54) of course.

Interviewer: Was everyone in that group active within the subcultures as well. I mean, were you kind of involved with, you know, it's (inaudible 00:11:03)

Respondent: Well, my own subcultural history would be, I'd come between the teds and the mods so that was the Italianate style. Yes, for a while I would dress in that way but I don't think we, my little peer group, I wouldn't call it a gang, but the guys would hang out together. We didn't see ourselves as subculture and we didn't all dress alike although we would tend to dress in short 'bum freezer' jackets and, you know, either jeans, tight jeans or straight legged trousers and winkle pickers. It was clearly less ted, more mod. It was moving that way. Yes, I was into that as a teenager but what happened, I think, and what tends to happen, is when I got interested in reading and intellectual activities and politics and certainly musically once you move on from early rock and roll (inaudible 00:12:01) into the rootsier stuff, the Beatles were teeny boppers. As far as I was concerned, they were teeny bopper music in the early 1960s...I was already into Dylan and moving, you know, into what I would call the more serious end of the rock thing. That also meant,

you know, getting, moving on from being an Italianate youngster to being, you know, blue jeans and student wear, casual, yeah, more casual sort of look by the time of late teens anyway. I was still wearing...I looked at my wedding photo because of this piece I'm going to write and I'm still in a kind of Italianate suit but, very quickly, as I say, especially...yeah. I was a school teacher remember as well so you couldn't...I would wear a kind of sharp suit but it was, I was quickly in my tracksuit to deal with the kids and, you have to be kind of moved on from the subculture, and I was a father, you know. It's kind of difficult to be a teeny bopper [as a teacher and father] but, nevertheless, I was thinking about the styles I've moved through. I mean, yeah, for a long long period it was blue jeans and, you know, student sort of wear which is just amorphous really isn't it? Grunge or whatever.

Interviewer: So what were the benefits, would you say, and the disadvantages of that group work you were involved in, so, obviously with Resistance Through Rituals and Policing the Crisis, you were heavily involved in that writing? What would you say were the plus sides and what were the down sides?

[00:13:43]

Respondent: The plus sides were so obvious really. One is that, you know, four or five brains can think more than one. I mean, I always felt, the fact that everything you wrote was going to be looked at by four or five other guys who, you know, were always sort of smarter than you anyway, so, basically, your finished product has gone through a review process, so, you know, I was less afraid to put it out into the world when all the...If Stuart and the others thought it was okay then it was okay. But, obviously there are downsides. Funnily enough, I was probably, well, I was the sort of unofficial editor when it came to Resisting because I just was organising things and calling meetings and geeing people up and so, having done it unofficially, Stuart said to me for Policing, 'You take on this', and so I did that officially if you like for Policing. The downsides of it are, as you know, people don't deliver on time or they write stuff that is, you know, needs a lot of work on it, you know, it's a long slow process that can, if it's working well it's great and the end result is always better but it can be slow, it can be, you know, time consuming and frustrating if people don't, sort of, pull their weight or deliver when they're supposed to.

Interviewer: I mean, obviously there was this, I mean, would you call the centre a collective at this point?

Respondent: It had lots of collectives. Yes, it was a collective but not everybody felt the same about it. There were a lot of people who thought, 'Well that's daft' [?], because they weren't in the centre centre and because I probably was (inaudible 00:15:40), you know, at the centre of things because Stuart was within the subcultures group and the media group. There may have been one other group he was in but, so, I saw a lot of Stuart and we were writing quite quickly the two projects so, you know, I was obviously very central in that and felt central in that way. And I went in a lot. You know, when I was there in Birmingham for the first part of the week and, of course, I moved up [to Birmingham from Harlow] after one year, you know, I'd be in a lot. I always lived close to the place and I was happy to be in the place. A lot of people would do it from a distance. They produced very good work but it was always from a distance and there were those sorts of characters and how they felt about it was obviously a bit different. I felt I loved everything about it.

Interviewer: Because you mentioned that bit, I mean, in terms of you meeting Stuart and being (inaudible 00:16:39) your projects were, kind of, taking place with Stuart because they were his projects too. I mean, what was Stuart's position in terms of the broader collective because, obviously, he was director but he was also handing over decisions to the students. So, how did that kind of play out in practice, do you remember?

Respondent: He was clearly very skilful at that and very trusting. In terms of the meetings, the admin meeting of which there was one a week and a theory seminar which were, you know, the two big, you know, collective events if you like. Stuart was always there for those things but he didn't lead them all. As I said, the chair was usually someone else so he. I think the chair, certainly, in the theory seminar would rotate and different people would say, 'I'll do that next week', you know, if it was some area they were particularly interested in or knew something about. People were very good at volunteering and doing these things, so, Stuart, I don't think, had to push people or, you know, ask them. It happened that way and, as I say, it is interesting that when you trust people they do the

business and, certainly, I don't remember that being difficult. Stuart, of course, had to sit in with subculture, media and there was probably another one after a while.

Interviewer: The State group maybe?

Respondent: Well that came later, so that wasn't happening at the same time. He was certainly in two subgroups as well as the theory group as well as trying to write his own stuff, as well as being constantly, I mean, I remember in many of those meetings, one of us would go down and get the coffee, we'd come up and we'd start in his room always. There would be a phone call and he'd take it and, you know, he wouldn't usually say, 'I'm in a meeting', he would usually take it and we would carry on chit chatting between ourselves and he'd take this and, you know, it could have been the media, it could have been some local activist, it could have been any number of people, always. So, there was always that side of it and then, of course, he was like the protector of the centre from the university. I mean, one of the things that happened when I was there, we had a bit sit in and –

[00:18:58]

Interviewer: What year was that in?

Respondent: That was 1974 I think.

Interviewer: Was this the overseas fees raising?

Respondent: No, it was actually about the attempt to either sack or reduce the hours of the cleaning staff (overspeaking).

Interviewer: I seen it from the archive actually yeah. I seen bits from your archive yeah.

Respondent: Okay. We were very involved in it as a centre, in leading positions because people were, you know post grads and they had been student leaders in the past so we led that thing, pretty much, along with, you know (inaudible 00:19:36) SWP and IMG and all the rest of it. Stuart had to protect, you know, he was called by the VC and the VC would say, 'Stuart, can you tell me why so many of your students are involved in the sit-in (inaudible 00:19:47), that kind of thing and he'd just have to cool it with the university. He had an awful lot to, sort of, manage.

Interviewer: Was he supportive of you, of the strike from your perspective of?

Respondent: Oh yeah. We came to Stuart and asked him what we should be doing.

Interviewer: Were you aware, as well, of course, about the myths around the 68 sit in as well? Stuart was obviously actively involved in that too so was that something that, I mean, people I've previously spoken to they've talked about the myths of the centre from previous years. Is that something that you were aware of, like, politically like?

Respondent: I knew that Chas Critcher had been involved in 68 because he was in the English department there [in Birmingham] as well wasn't he? I knew that people like Chas had been involved but, you know, it wasn't a strong theme that we (overspeaking) but yeah, I mean, 68 had been foundational for us all in a way just because of what happened and what that was about and where that led to. I mean, we were all of that kind of age and era really where –

Interviewer: And where did class come into it? In the sense, I mean, were everyone from similar kind of backgrounds, I mean, because obviously Stuart's got his own particular formation, Michael was coming up from a kind of city Oxbridge formation but Stuart was a Rhodes scholar. Richard came in what 74 so, what about, from your perspective?

Respondent: Well, people like me, John Clarke, Dick Hebdige we were all working class. We were all, you know, centred in that subculture's group. It felt very much like a working class lads' group which was good, you know. There was a middle class, sort of, contingent. You know, people like, I'd

kind of assume people like John Ellis and Ros Coward and people like that were of a different class background than me. You know, they'd been to Oxbridge so...Paul Willis was working class too but he'd been to Cambridge. Roger Grimshaw was, kind of, perhaps lower middle class but he, you know, came –

Interviewer: Was that something that was initially a live issue?

Respondent: It wasn't a live issue. I think it became a bit of an issue when Paul Lester arrived.

Interviewer: I know of Paul Lester.

[00:22:09]

Respondent: Paul would kind of go to meetings in a mac. He would never take his mac off. It was almost as if he was never, he never quite settled enough to take his mac off. He went on to, sort of, become a kind of local poet and we're going to hear him do a poetry reading at the CP club or something. He got on very well with Roger Grimshaw.

Interviewer: He wrote a piece on the Loch Ness monster.

Respondent: That's right. He and Roger were sort of, kind of, united about that. But I think he got on very well with what he called, 'The RosJohn', which was Ros Coward and John Ellis because they were together all the time and they called them the RosJohn and he got on very well with them but there was a clear, marked class difference and, somehow, I became more aware of it with Paul around. It is interesting because Stuart, who's a different class background to the subculture's group but because he was black, I suppose, we were all kind of, sort of, in our own way outsiders but then, suddenly we weren't, of course, because we were all post graduate students at a university. You could hardly call yourselves, sort of, working class outsiders really. We were scholarship boys.

Interviewer: What about, talking about Stuart, but how did Stuart's role differ from say, Michael's and then later when Richard joined. What was their roles in relation to Stuart?

Respondent: Michael was I remember only part-time, he was only half-time with us. He was also in English. Also, I saw less of Michael because I was in Stuart's groups and not Michael's groups. Whenever I had any interaction with Michael it always was fine and, you know, he was a very very good teacher and very very, you know, stalwart around the place. Somehow I never got as close to him as to Stuart because I just had less to do with him. Sometimes there were little niggles I think. I mean, Stuart never made anything of it but the fact is that Michael didn't produce in the way that, these days, it would be absolutely automatic and, of course, he never made full Prof after all those years. He was clearly bright enough and smart enough to do it so quite a lot was going on there that I never knew but Stuart never made anything of it. He never made anything of it but ...it was noticeable really, you know, that Stuart was in a, sort of, different league to Michael.

Interviewer: And Richard when he arrived?

Respondent: Yeah, Richard was a sort of heavyweight historian and, yeah, again, I wasn't in his groups, which were the history group and the education group. By then, you know, I was very much in Stuart's circle but I didn't, you know...again I always had great admiration for Richard. Extraordinary hard working and extremely good at what he did.

Interviewer: Did it have any effect on him and Stuart. Richard was appointed to (inaudible 00:25:13) some history. Do you have any reflections on coming out from your particular interest and your, sort of, groups that you were active in? Was the bringing of history into the centre, do you have any reflections on that process? Was it ever a, kind of, you know simplistic or traumatic?

Respondent: I mean, it did make us all, you know, more kind of professionally historical but we had always, you know, approached things historically. You know, we started out with Marx and worked forward.

You know, we'd been reading as, you might say, monhistorians but we'd been entering into our work always with a historical hat on as well as a, kind of, theory hat on and a political hat, so, I never felt that that shifted (inaudible 00:26:02). It just made it more, you know, he was just more well read and, you know, grounded in that side of things. That's how I saw him. He was very good at it.

Interviewer: And what about, you've touched on this a little bit already but, politics within the centre? The whole spectrum of left politics that were active. The IMG, Big Flame, SWP. Even in the Labour party some people, I believe, were members of the Labour party.

Respondent: Yeah, they were all there.

Interviewer: So how did that all come together?

[00:26:38]

Respondent: Well, I mean, obviously when people went up and spoke, although, you know, they weren't speaking from an IMG or SWP position. If they were of that persuasion that would inform the way they looked at problems so we had all of that swilling around in terms of people's thinking and actions. Again, as far as...the only real, sort of, split as you know from doing this work I'm sure, there was the feminist moment which, kind of, it was always building up through my period but it wasn't...I think the actual real kind of split comes after I'm, sort of, on the way out or, you know, I was there 72 to, I got a job in Sheffield in 77, the last year I was working long hours at the Old Poly, whatever it's called now, Central Birmingham Uni, you know, two days a week there at least and then trying to work on my thesis the other days and, you know, I was kind of popping in the centre for the State group by then but that was about all. Really, after 76, I'd had my three years, 73, 74, 75, after 76 I wasn't funded there so I would have to be working and I think it was around that time that things were probably, kind of, hotting up on the feminist front so I, kind of, missed the worst of that, I'm afraid. Stuart had to bear a lot of that I think.

Interviewer: What were your reflections on it, I mean, were you there from when it kind of entered or began to become an issue and that did affect the –

Respondent: Yeah, I mean, there was small things at first, like, you know, saying you shouldn't be smoking in the rooms. I must admit that I had a difficulty with Angie McRobbie over her piece for *Resistance*. We realised we had nothing on female subcultures. There was very little out there, you know, so Angela was, that was kind of her area. She came the year after [me]. I'm trying to think. I don't remember her being in the subcultures group as such but that may be part of my memory repressing something. She certainly wasn't involved in the book as such

Retrospective note from TJ: [reading this through afterwards and checking, I realise she was on the editorial group so must have been involved: selective memory at work again, I'm afraid].

She wrote her piece but I can remember I was doing my editorial thing and, sort of, making suggestions and she got very upset, very upset. I think on grounds of, you know, somehow being edited by a man or something. I don't know quite what and I had to go to Stuart and say, 'Look, I'm having trouble here', and he had to step in and sort of take over and apologised for allowing me to take that from her. So, that to me, was the only sign that this wasn't just about, you know, we had none of these problems with, kind of, editing or working with my male colleagues. I just got such a prickly response from Angela and it had to be something about more than just what I was saying about the piece. There was a little sign there and, you know, there was a little, there was a little bit of a contretemps between Ros Coward who wrote a piece that was kind of critical of *Resistance* and what we were up to –

Interviewer: Is this Ros Coward

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Who had her *Screen* piece?

Respondent: Yeah and we, a group of us, including Ian Connell wrote a response to that. I remember that. That was probably about 74/5. There were those, sort of, kind of intellectual differences but underneath them there was also probably an issue about feminism

TJ Retrospective note: [and about insider/outsider status and the marginalisation (as she saw it) of her own 'ideology and consciousness' approach].

Interviewer: How do you like, I mean, with (inaudible 00:31:10). The women's liberation movement was something that sprung out in like 68. It was around, I mean, (inaudible 00:31:15) women's groups outside of the centre but in that earlier period, it wasn't so much there. In the early 70s it wasn't within the centre so, what, you know, had you encountered women's liberation externally previously or was that something that?

Respondent: Yes, in the sense that, I mean, I was well aware that Cath Hall and Nancy Connell and others (inaudible 00:31:41) were engaged in feminist women's lib activities outside of the centre and, you're right, it was there and it was outside but it was certainly affecting people's relationships inside their marriages and relationships. In my own particular case, my own then wife was not involved in women's lib so (inaudible 00:32:09) although I was doing some of the new man type things, it was much more traditional and not, kind of, ridden by the kind of conflicts that were beginning to happen in some households. But those big big conflicts, no they didn't surface in the centre in those early 70s.

[00:32:34]

Interviewer: Do you have any sense of how they subsequently changed the working of the centre? I mean, you mentioned that you'd left, you were doing other things by the sort of later 70s but, from the outside, as it were, looking in, did you have any sense of how things changed?

Respondent: Not really because when I left and took up my job in 77 it wasn't very long after that Stuart left for the OU.

Interviewer: 79 for Stuart.

Respondent: 79. So, kind of, a lot of this stuff would be going through the 80s I'd guess and, you know, it did happen beyond my time and, you know, because I was first of all, because I'd moved into criminology in a way I didn't have so much connection with cultural studies for a while.

Interviewer: What about race because, I mean, the interesting thing about Stuart, that you touched upon that Stuart's position being a black man and, then, of course, Policing the Crisis, central to that is race and then (inaudible 00:33:36) came along slightly later. It's like the race and politics subgroup. I was wondering if you kind of had any kind of feel –

Respondent: Again, I think that probably starts just as I'm on my way out. They were working on that journal in (overspeaking) when I wasn't, you know, around much. I wasn't too aware of what was going on

Interviewer: At the time, when you were actually researching your writing, I'm presuming you, you know, at that time or just before you were living with Chas in Handsworth whilst, you know, presuming that's the kind of climate in Handsworth in the early 70s. Like we talked about the Handsworth gig a few years ago. You know, at that time, when you were researching was it, you know, living in Handsworth (inaudible 00:35:08) then Edgbaston, that must have felt like two different worlds in one sense?

Respondent: Yeah, of course and I wasn't, when I lived at 40 Hall Road, I wasn't like they were involved in the day to day politics of the place. I was there, I was at the centre and then I was there for, you know, just for somewhere to stay so I didn't get involved in the place in any real way. I sometimes sat in on their meetings but, you know (inaudible 00:35:35), but I didn't, I wouldn't say I got involved and knew what was going on in Handsworth in any serious sense. No, I wouldn't want to...

Interviewer: Was there a broader, kind of, what was the relationship between the centre and the outside world more broadly? I mean, did the politics of the centre, in these various different guises and forms, was that seen as being for you like (inaudible 00:35:59) itself or was it connect, do you think, to a broader struggle in Birmingham, West Midlands or, you know, beyond that in Britain?

Respondent: Well, for me personally, there were occasional little things that happened that I got involved in and, of course, one of them would have been what we called the 'Paul, Jimmy and Musty Support Committee' around the three boys that were sentenced for the mugging. There were some other little things around, I don't know, the showing of a film and I think it was Ros Coward and one or two others. It was either a sexist film or something and so we were outside leafleting and trying to persuade people not to see it. I can't remember what the film was.

Interviewer: But you were on a committee, going back to the Paul Storey case, you were on a support committee were you?

[00:36:57]

Respondent: Yeah, we called ourselves a support group but we were basically the Policing the Crisis group and we rolled out a pamphlet

Interviewer: Okay. I think I have got some, I think maybe Chas gave it to me or something.

Respondent: Right, a little pamphlet, so, in those small ways if something, kind of, came up and of course the occupation...anything came up that seemed relevant to do I might have been involved but I did, you know, I did take seriously what Stuart always talked about, the politics of intellectual work. I mean, this is what our, this is where our politics were lying and, yeah, you know, there were times when you had to be on the picket line or, you know, in the demonstration or doing the mundane stuff but I always felt our real contribution was through what we wrote and taught but there were others who were in the parties, the various parties you mentioned, and they would be doing, you know, their work for the party in the way that, you know, party activists do. I mean, Ian Connell was very involved with the CP and, you know, this was an important part of what he did. I, as I say, I never quite got over my early relationship to that as I was mentioning earlier and I...this is where you get to a psychic dimension, I mean, you know, when I think about my father who, although he wasn't political in any strong sense at all, but he was a non-joiner. I guess that at some levels you become your father and I hadn't been a joiner and I'd never joined a political party. I think Stuart once said he had a year with the Labour party but that was all and he hasn't joined political parties and so when I realised that then I thought it was okay. If Stuart hadn't joined it I could sort of stay out.

Interviewer: Did you see that subculture work as a form of identity politics? I mean, in one sense, we've talked about feminism, we've talked about rights and you could argue that's the emergence of identity politics from within the centre. Did you see that youth work, subcultural youth work, at the time or now, looking back at it, as identity politics as well?

Respondent: I didn't at the time, certainly. I realised there was a strong biographical dimension to what we were doing. That is to say, like I was saying earlier, I mean, I identified with a youth subculture. Dick, in his way was clearly part of something and so on. Mostly, I think, I was...I think, coming out of the teaching experience as well I was aware of, you know, how blighted young people's lives were and could be and so, you know, it was certainly a politics around sticking up for youth but, in terms of my own identity, I guess, yeah, apart from the biographical dimension, it was...I guess if you've been through youth subculture, if you're post rock and roll, I mean, in a sense, you're always [identified with the music], you know, I've always loved music and gone through various changes but, I mean, basically, that sort of, what starts with rock and roll for me is, you know, such a significant part of my life, so, in that sense, it's a form of identity politics because really it's all about youth. Youth is all about music and, you know, essentially the music.

Interviewer: Where did the motivation come for the publications because, you know, it seems looking back on it, it wasn't so much of a career, an academic careerist atmosphere within the centre as there is in universities now? So where, maybe there was I don't know, but, was it...were your books that you

were co-publishing, were they written, what was the reason they were written for? Was it to have a career or to?

Respondent: No, not at all. The interesting thing, I thought about that only recently. All of those works became the Hutchinson Series of Centre Books. They all started out and, indeed, it has to be Resistance that started the thing off I'm pleased to say. They all started out as working papers in cultural studies and that's exactly what we saw them as. I mean, you know, so we were writing for our peers and to tell them what we were doing and so on. That's that. The Policing, as I say, grew out of the sort of anger and the political anger at this, sort of, outrageous sentence and so we started thinking we're going to write a Penguin Special and that just grew, one of the problems of writing with five I think. So that had no other motive than getting something out quickly (inaudible 00:41:07). We didn't manage it but that was the intention. On the way we got invited, I'm talking about John and me because we wrote together for a while, a chapter for a book here or a New Community article there. These things just came up and we accepted them when they came up. We were...I never, I mean, it took me a long while before I started sort of thinking I've got to, I'm going to get this out (inaudible 00:42:35), it was usually people coming to you and I saw that with Stuart. You know, people were asking him all the time. It was a question of, 'Yes,, yes', 'No, no, no, no', 'Yes', 'Maybe', and for a while it was certainly like that [responding to invitations] and so I never thought about I've got to go out there and publish, it was just happening.

[00:42:56]

Interviewer: So then but, in terms of...is that when you said you got the job in Sheffield? So what was the difference between, you know, there must be more experiences in the centre to then (overspeaking) go into the, you know, Sheffield (overspeaking)?

Respondent: Well you see I was a researcher. I got this Home Office research fellowship to do research on policing. At first, I didn't move out of Birmingham. I was commuting to Sheffield and doing the research in the West Midlands Police. Ethnographic work as it were whilst trying to think about ethnography also in structural terms and I now talk about Policing the Crisis as a structural ethnography (inaudible 00:43:44). I'd have to go up to Sheffield (inaudible 00:43:44) to the university once a week to, sort of, show my face and talk to...going to the coffee room, you know, at 11.00. It was a law department. (inaudible 00:43:56) They were lawyers I had nothing in common with and even the criminologists, only one or two were really interested in the same thing as I was. Ian Taylor was there but, you know, he would often be away and doing other things so the chance of bumping into anybody of any interest in the coffee shop was very remote. I wondered what on earth I was doing there at that level and it was a very isolating scene compared to Birmingham. It was just totally different. I mean –

Interviewer: And political at all in the same way as the centre?

Respondent: No. Apart from the individuals like Ian Taylor [co-author of *The New Criminology*, an influential text for the subcultures group]. There was a group of critical lawyers who I didn't get on with very well because they, somehow, got me marked down as a Marxist and they had moved on from Marx to, they saw themselves as Habermasians or something even though, Habermas would not be that uninterested in Marx, but anyway, I was kind of pretty much on my own there for a while. All my intellectual and political contacts were outside the university, sometimes in Sheffield but often, you know, countrywide or, thankfully, global by then.

Interviewer: I mean, obviously you worked in higher education throughout into the 1980s and beyond. What do you think were the, you know, to use the phrase at the time, the conjuncture. What was it about the conjuncture do you think of the 1970s when you were at the centre that allowed it to operate in such a way and then how do you think that has changed, you know, subsequently?

Respondent: Well, I mean, I think, you know, we now know, I now know as a result of working on *RTR* (inaudible 00:45:46) and *Policing* that, you know, the 70s, the early 70s was the sort of last gasp of social democracy. We were the last beneficiaries. I mean, I had a grant. Not only did I have a grant for my PhD, I had a family allowance attached to it. I was better off, actually, then when I had been school teaching. School teachers weren't paid very much. So, in those ways, we were the last of

that privileged few. In the mid 70s it all begins to fall apart, the oil crisis, all of those things and the late 70s, you know, the beginnings of what we now know as, it sort of morphed into Thatcherism and so on and all that that has meant for education. So, you know, in a conjunctural reading, the university has become commodified and marketised and, you know, not quite privatised but, you know, we're actually relying heavily on student fees now. It's a different ball game and that knowledge for knowledge sake, you know, I went to university not to get a degree or to...of course that too, but I went there to read. I went there to read.

Interviewer: Which goes out the window when it's costing £9000 just to –

Respondent: How quickly can I get this out (inaudible 00:47:22), yeah.

Interviewer: Just finally then, I mean, obviously at the time there was a kind of emphasis, a Gramscian emphasis on his notion of the organic intellectual. Did you then, kind of, see yourself as an organic intellectual, you know, do you still?

[00:47:35]

Respondent: Well, as I say, Stuart used to talk about organic intellectuals and the politics of intellectual work and, you know, before I went to the centre I didn't know what the term meant of course but, you know, when Stuart talked about it, yeah, we were trying to, you know, use our intellect on behalf of the downtrodden. I mean, I saw it very much in those terms. I mean, of course one shouldn't ignore the fact that, you know, reading all this stuff in itself was exciting. It's a kind of an elaborate play at one level and we were being paid for play but, you know, there was an underlying anger and a politics which informed it, no question, as far as I'm concerned.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, thanks.

[End of Transcript]