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Interviewer: So I was going to ask first and, just beginning really, to what brought you to the centre in the first instance and what was your, kind of, intellectual baggage, for want of a better term?

Respondent: I was doing a PhD in anthropology at the University of Chicago and everyone else in the department at that point in time, which was the early 1980s, were studying adults in southern countries—the ‘exotic other’—and I was studying how suburban middle class American teenagers came to see themselves as unique individuals who shaped themselves by themselves. I came across cultural studies and one of my supervisors did as well. It just opened my eyes to a different way of thinking, of contextualising the thoughts and actions of the young people I had been studying. When I read *Resistance through Rituals*, when I read *Subculture: The meaning of Style*, all of those books just kind of blew my framework away and I thought I really want to go there to be able to add their insights to those I was developing from anthropology. So, I wrote to Richard Johnson, who was the director at CCCS at that point in time, and I said, ‘I’d like to come, I am going to apply for some funding, can you provide a statement of support, which Richard did, but I didn’t get the funding and never heard back from Richard. Don’t get me wrong, Richard is a friend of mine now, but he was not at that point in time the most well-organised people! So I wrote to him again about a month before I was scheduled to come and said I was still hoping to come. Richard later told me that my letter had gone to the bottom of his inbox, but at that point he said to me, ‘yes, please come’, so I did.

Interviewer: What year was that?

Respondent: That was in 19, that was in June 1985 I came and I came to hear the end of the year reports, which were interesting, but then followed by a relatively isolated summer until the next batch of students came in late September 1985. I was really pleased, nonetheless, to be there, having read the earlier classics and having the chance to meet some of the authors and learn what they had been learning and teaching. I really liked Cultural Studies’ theoretical perspective, not so much its methodological perspective, which was influenced more by Chicago Sociology than anthropology. Ethnography was the methodology in both, but it worked very different in each. For anthropologists, our methodology came from living somewhere, learning a new language, learning a new culture, being completely in this other place for over a year. That wasn’t how ethnography was done in Sociology which was largely based on discrete interviews with people and not on living in a community, learning another language and way of life—although arguably teenagers are a radically different group and I did write a chapter about the ways that they used language as part of the process of seemingly differentiating themselves from others and creating themselves as ‘unique individuals’. I still feel that the legacy of anthropology for me was about getting this way of understanding another culture, or subculture, whether it’s within or outside your own cultural. So, I came to cultural studies with a highly theoretical framework from Chicago that helped me get to the core of another set of assumptions and what the young people I studied believed was their own radically different way of living and being, which separated them from others. .

Interviewer: To what extent was cultural studies’ work an influence on anthropology when you were in the States? Was it a school that was prominent on the, kind of, teaching courses or modules or, was it very much, kind of, some (inaudible 00:04:23) or did you, kind of, just come across it by the by more?

Respondent: Cultural studies was a subterranean influence at that point in time. I was on a beach in Chicago in the summer of 1981 *Resistance through Rituals*, which had been published a few years earlier—76 or 77—and someone came up to me and he said to me, ‘I bet you’re the only other person on this beach who has heard of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies’. People just didn’t know about Cultural Studies. The books were just being published in the States and were hard copy only so they were expensive, Given that anthropology at that time focused almost solely on adults elsewhere, I could only take its theories so far. I just felt that I needed to understand how young people were negotiating the highly industrialised and commodified world that they lived in. How

they were negotiating the lifestyles that they thought they were innovatively creating but, in fact, were caricaturing that which existed around them. I did feel that Cultural Studies powerfully helped me to develop my theoretical framework. So, I mean, initially, when I got my first job in this country teaching gender in a Sociology Department, I told people that I had done a PhD in Anthropology and Cultural Studies and that I was teaching Women's Studies in a Sociology Department. I very clearly saw myself as sitting between as being disciplines and I still think I do although I've been in a sociology department and I probably would call myself a sociologist but, I'm not wedded to any particular discipline, so, Cultural Studies, as a theoretical framework, really gave me a way of thinking, thinking and theorising the group that I had studied very differently than I would otherwise have done. I had done my fieldwork before I came here but it really helped me to understand what the teenagers that I had spent a year with, how they had understood the world that they lived in.

Interviewer: What about politics? I mean, was there, did you know anything before you arrived at the Centre about its politics and was that part of the appeal?

Respondent: Oh god, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, I said, when I came to this country, it was a very, very naive view, but I was politically naïve then, and I said, 'I'm going to Cultural Studies to learn more about feminism and Marxism', because I saw that those were key influences in Cultural Studies and I had already been writing a bit about feminist issues. My first published paper was called 'Why is Slut is a Slut: Cautionary tales of American suburban middle class teenage sexual morality'. And certainly, reading cultural studies material on young people and commodification, and material on gender and gender identities of working class young women and the ways that the society generally and its media in particular shaped them to occupy subordinate roles relative to the lads they knew and had relationships with and the ways that they used commodities and media to create their identities and relationships—all that powerfully shaped by my attempt to understand how US young people produced their gender and sexual relationships. With regard to Marxism, two of my PhD supervisors were Marxists and, in the US, when I was growing up in a largely nouveau riche community, I was really brainwashed to be anti-communist. I mean, really brainwashed. When one of my PhD supervisors gave some lectures on Marx, I'm embarrassed to say it, that it wasn't until I was a post-graduate student, and I just couldn't believe what Marx was saying, that Marx was a humanist who wanted to improve the world for the majority of people. I know it sounds ignorant now, but I was. I then began to read Marx more fully, and some Gramsci and Althusser, but it really coming here and being in reading groups at the Centre and having the space not just for being lectured at, but for discussion in a way that was antithetical to what I, what was happening in Chicago because Chicago was very elitist and hierarchical, really impacted on me. CulturalStudies was not elitist in the same way as anthropology at Chicago had been, but it did have its implicit hierarchies.

Interviewer: Which were? What were? Because I know they had the commitment to democratising the, kind of, staff/student relations. So, you know, did you feel that straight away or did you feel?

Respondent: I didn't feel it straight away. I came in, in a kind of, intermediate position, but I had finished all my coursework at Chicago and was in the writing stage of my PhD. although it took me then a good few years to finish it, because I wanted to really take on board the Cultural Studies framework. So, I'd done all my PhD studying. But I wanted to take the postgraduate course at Cultural Studies because I really wanted to engage with its theoretical framework. So I was somewhere between being a student and staff. Maureen was just great, Maureen McNeil was just fantastic. She helped me find a place to live. We became good friends, you know, she really, especially that first summer when I was very isolated she really supported me, as a good feminist academic would, and we became friends. So, I was not staff and I was more staff than student in the beginning and, probably always was to some extent, but, because I took the classes, because I wanted to learn about the perspectives. I loved, I loved the reading groups. I thought it was fantastic because in Chicago, you would have seminars but the seminars were about, or at least felt to me, that they were about, who could say the most clever thing and be affirmed by the lecturer as the next golden boy or golden girl and that was, I think, a very damaging experience for many people there, including me.

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- Interviewer: Whereas in Birmingham the centre was more communal?
- Respondent: It was more dialogical. It was much more, there were classes but there were also reading groups. Although, in classes there would be a lot of space for discussion which I just loved because the tutors did not present themselves as superior to students but as engaged in discussion with peers—many of whom were the same age as the tutors. I did feel that I had to unlearn the kind of explicit hierarchies that I'd had at Chicago which were just so damaging. Then, having the reading groups you could join a reading group and in several of the reading groups we had plans for books but those books didn't happen although off-Centre, to which I contributed, did happen. So, we didn't have, we did have plans for books and we talked to publishers, Hutchinson Press, I think it was then, who worked with CCCS. And at the Centre there was a real sense of people being politically sussed although, political engagement itself, was not as deep as I would have hoped. People that I know now have said that they thought that at Cultural Studies, for example, I came right after the miners' strike ended, and people I came to know said, 'Where was Cultural Studies during the miners' strike?' and I don't know, but, I didn't hear much about the presence of people from Cultural Studies being politically active. ... The political seemed to be more theoretical rather than interrelated to practice.
- Interviewer: Was there a sense that, kind of, the academic work had, kind of, almost taken, come to the fore ahead of the politicised engagement?
- Respondent: I don't know if that was a new phenomenon or an old phenomenon, I couldn't say but, it felt to me that, unlike in Chicago where the political work, the politics of the theoretical work that you were learning, wasn't really in the forefront. One of my colleagues at Chicago had done her fieldwork in Latin America and gave a talk to a community group about the political situation where she had worked. She was called in by the Department and told that she should not do such work. But at Cultural Studies, left perspectives were explored, encouraged, and that was really fantastic. You know, to think about, as a Yank, to think about class and to think about how my PhD was really about how suburban middle class teenagers acquired a sense of being unique individuals and it was a really class based sense of individuality that they were developing but, it was all never spoken because class is not spoken in the US. Well, only if you think you're middle class and the last stats I saw, 90% of Americans still think that they're middle class although, since the Occupy Wall Street Movement, that may very well have changed. So, yeah, so, so, what was amazing to me was just to be able to have these discussions. To talk to Richard or Maureen or Michael as much to the other student and that was, I do think that people felt that they, that the staff were really available. We had, we had, what did they call it, day schools at the centre which I had never gone to before, where you have people giving presentations but not that they were the expert but that they were trying something out and talking about it to other people so that they could develop it further—a very un-Chicago way of presenting your work!
- Interviewer: What was the position of, you mentioned the staff when you were there which were obviously Richard, Michael and Maureen. You were kind of standing in between. What was the, because obviously there was this commitment to doing things like the subgroups, the reading groups that commitment to doing things differently that traditional academic institutions but, then again, Maureen, Richard and Michael were staff members, lecturers. I mean how did that actually play out in practice? I mean were they leading debates, were they leading intellectual, kind of, developments or was it genuinely, did the students genuinely, kind of, feel they had the space to challenge and lead themselves?
- Respondent: It felt to me that it was pretty genuine, speaking from both students and staff points of view, but the hierarchy was felt by some of the students and was supported implicitly by some staff. People in the year, I started officially in the class in 1985, the (inaudible 00:15:14) and was also there in 1986 and I was concerned about the people who thought that they were located in the B group; it was they who said that it felt to them as if there was an A and B group. Have you heard this?
- Interviewer: No.
- Respondent: Okay, well I feel somewhat uncomfortable saying this but I do think it is important to note that Cultural Studies had its own hierarchies.

- Interviewer: I've not heard of the A team and B team specifically but is that something that the students would have?
- Respondent: That's what, no, the B team used those terms. I felt really, I hadn't, I suppose initially because I'd had friends in both camps, and kept friends in both camps, because I came in at a relatively privileged position this divide, it was initially not clear to me. When it was pointed out to me I could see what it was; some students felt that they had the authority to talk and they spoke theory quite readily, sometimes dis-engaged from practice. This is a long time ago now, but, I think, the B team students felt that these A team students were more affirmed and were able to articulate their positions more than the B team students.
- Interviewer: Obviously, being, kind of, somewhat an outsider yourself to this positioning, but, were these kinds of perceptions about A teams and B teams about perceived favourites amongst staff members or?
- Respondent: Yes and no. It was more or less who was more theory-based and who was more practice-based. That isn't quite right; it was a division between those who gave priority to theory when looking at practice and those who used theory to explore practice. Theory based people were those who were more in the A team for the most part but the B team largely started from practice. Michael took the B team's side. Michael was seen as being on the side of the B team because he was much more, although you know, it's clear that Michael was very theoretically savvy, he was very interested in seeing its application. I straddled the groups, and Maureen didn't want to be seen to be on either side and supported all students. I think Richard wasn't quite aware of the divide, or didn't quite realise how he was placed with the A team. I straddled both of them but ultimately I took the B group side because I just felt having come from a highly elitist and hierarchical place, I couldn't bear to see people who felt really hurt that their voices weren't being heard as much as that of the A team.
- Interviewer: Why was theory seen as being of more, valued more within the Centre?
- Respondent: These are my remembered perceptions, but theory is prioritised because that's how the academy works. I mean, as someone who researches higher education, it is clear to me that education is seen as having a lesser status wise than studying politics or religion or the economy, philosophy, and philosophy of course, social theory, of course, the latter are among the most prestigious topics in the social sciences. So, even if you develop a theoretically informed perspective on education, as many of us do, whatever aspect of HE or Education more generally you study, relative to other subjects, you are seen as second class. After all, all academics who work in the university are part of an educational institution and have grounded experience in it, but that's their bread and butter, that pays for them to do other things. Only some of us study what is deemed others' bread and butter.
- Interviewer: Even in the context of, because that's the interesting thing about the Centre –
- Respondent: I'm not talking about the Centre.
- Interviewer: Yeah, I know but, like, in terms of the division between us perceiving an A and B group, and one being perceived as more theory-based and one, you know, being seen as more practical. You know, one of the more interesting things about the earlier history of the centre is that, of course, that division has always, kind of, been there. You know, Dorothy Hobson's work on, you know, soap operas is very practical. You know, Paul Willis' work on, you know, theory and practice is also deemed to be more in the practice camp. So, it's interesting that in many, many ways that it's still, kind of, there even when you were there in the mid 1980s I guess.
- Respondent: Yeah, yeah, it was definitely there. I mean, it was an exciting, it was a really exciting place to be. A really exciting place to be theoretically and some of the things that I'd been reading in Chicago, we read in cultural studies as well. We read them somewhat differently because, of course, anthropology has a different take on things, given that it's location was then normally outside the west and so you get a totally different perspective on ethnography, on Gramsci, on Marx, on Althusser, on the way in which the cultural domain operates because, cultural of course, and anthropology, I was in a cultural anthropology department. In the US it was called cultural

anthropology. It was looking at the meanings and lifestyles of and values of people in southern countries, although anthropology has obviously come into the present much more fully since then but, when I came to cultural studies and was reading about Raymond Williams' concept of culture as a way of life, that is what anthropology looked at and so, there was a kind of a kinship between anthropology and cultural studies, but cultural studies really understood the modern media and understood commodification as a process which anthropology understood theoretically but the modern world wasn't really brought into anthropology very much at that point in time in terms of the commodification of life in the west. There was just the beginning of studying how Western life was impacting on the third world at that point in time, so, for me, cultural studies, as I've said earlier, was just this amazing breath of fresh air, theoretically for understanding first world young people. Methodologically, I didn't think it was all that great. That may be my hubris as an anthropologist because I still think that the training I got in anthropology to look, went to see, speech to see extracts from interviews as action, and not just as the meaning in it but that the act of saying those words, itself, the speaking, is littered with meaning. The doing of speech, it needs to be seen as a process and I didn't think that cultural studies had that. That's because it got, it got ethnography from sociology and sociology didn't do that either. So, I think ethnographically it was, because ethnography is what I was doing, textual analysis were fantastic at cultural studies again looking at semiotics, reading popular culture. I had already done sociolinguistics so I felt that it, I'm not sure how much I added, in terms of sociolinguistics or but, looking, things were added in terms of looking at a film, at art, at popular culture, all that was so enhanced through what cultural studies brought to it: seeing the media as engaged in a process of commodification, as a process of meaning making that was then appropriated for purposes of commodification and domestication, like a piercing, putting a safety pin in your cheek and the way in which Hebdige for one talked about how that safety pins were then re-signified. At that point in time, actually, I had a little safety pin earring which I bought (cheaply, I admit!) because it was really cheap and when I read Hebdige, I became really embarrassed. I didn't wear it after that because I suddenly realised that, actually, I was part of a process of ripping off punk culture from the early to mid 1970s. So, seeing the world around me in this highly, seeing the commodities in the world around me in a highly politicised way was just mind-boggling.

Interviewer: Just to follow up a little bit more broadly. What do you think were the benefits and what do you think were the disadvantages of the collaborative approach to research and teaching at the Centre?

Respondent: Enormous benefit. That's probably because I never had that before. Sitting in seminars in the US and thinking, 'If I open my mouth now I'll probably sound stupid so how can I say something which doesn't sound stupid?' That was the feeling in the US but, coming to Cultural Studies, people did feel that they could say what they wanted, what they thought. That they could experiment. That they could suggest that we read something that wasn't on the reading list. I couldn't believe that. I mean it's really elementary these kinds of things that I didn't take for granted, that were a surprise to me but, the kind of way of, having dialogues about curriculum, having dialogues about a topic, disagreeing with your lecturer and your lecturer, well they're not your lecturer but they're listening to you and they let you know that they're thinking, 'Oh that's an interesting point, I hadn't thought about that before'. I had not had that in the US, and it did feel that that was the case and then, if you wanted to form a reading group or a subgroup, you could actually, you could just do it. You could just form one and get other people to join. I remember I was in a film group and we just started watching some films and watching them and talking about them and watching a second time and talking about them and I never would have done that in Chicago. Just the idea that, that popular culture was redolent with meaning, was an amazing experience. And there were spaces for criticism as well about what was taught, how it was taught, although, as I say, some things weren't as talked about as others but, it did feel to me like a space unlike any I had ever been in before. It definitely influenced where I've gone from there, powerfully. I mean, I left, I was at cultural studies from 85 to 87 and then I became an ethnographer with Paul Willis at Wolverhampton University. I was part of a project he had some funding for, which was basically, it came out with the book *Common Culture* but, it was basically taking ideas from *Learning to labour* into a wider working class context exploring how groups of working class group of young people developed creative, popular, cultural activities. So, you know, so, I was able to move from cultural studies to that and then into a full-blown academic career. But, what cultural studies did for me,

really, was to start me on a process of seeing education as a dialogue. I had a lot to unlearn. The hierarchy that I had had through my entire education up to then, because education is an incredibly, in the main, a very hierarchical experience, but, cultural studies opened my eyes to the fact that it could be otherwise, it could be different, it could be lecturers listening to students as much as students were listening to lecturers. That was amazing.

Interviewer: What was the role of politics within the centre whilst you were there? If there was one.

Respondent: Yeah, there was one. It was pretty much gender and sexuality and that fit with my work, which at that point in time, was about gender and sexuality. It was great to me to be meeting up with many more people who were 'out' about their sexuality than I had met before as a straight woman from the US. It did feel to me that in Cultural Studies, and in British culture generally, there was more discussion of issues around gender and sexual identities than in the US—although that may have been the circles I was part of in the US before leaving.

Interviewer: What were the key aspects of those gender and sexuality issues within the centre? I mean, of course, there was the first, an earlier wave, you know, Women Take Issue generation. Do you have a perception on how it had shifted and what the kind of key issues that were being encountered at that point?

Respondent: I think that the assumptions that guided the Women Take Issue generation as you call them were those that we took for granted. We were talking more about understanding the implications and ramifications of gendered and sexualised hierarchies. This was something I had begun to explore in my PhD, in one of my papers on 'Passing Notes and Telling Jokes'—about the gendered ways that middle class young people sought to subvert teacher authority in the classroom.

Interviewer: What about your paper on 'Doing Nothing' –

Respondent: Yeah, that was more about exploring the ramifications of gendered hierarchies on the young people who produced these hierarchies. This was part of my research with Paul Willis and I went to this. I wrote this paper after I went to a youth club to do some interviews with some working class young people, and these lads were talking about how they liked to go drinking and then get into fighting. I went there one week and had that discussion and I came back the next week and one of the lads had stitches all over his face and another one was, as this first lad told me, up for GBH (Grievous Bodily Harm). I asked the lad I was talking to what had happened. And we got into an astonishing discussion of how working class masculinity was seemingly enhanced by drinking and then when drunk, a lad would get into a fight. This bloke said that when he had a fight with the bloke now up for GBH, he had drunk so much that it felt to him as if the fight was one on TV, rather than one in which he was engaged. So by asserting his masculinity in a context of high levels of alcohol, and having a fight, it was as if the affirmation of masculinity was contradicted by drinking which made one act with a sense of power that they didn't ordinarily have, so there was a fundamental uncertainty about what this affirmation of masculinity enabled. Certainly when I was at the Centre there was a masculinities reading group but I'm not sure if I was in it or not. But I was doing a lot of reading around issues of masculinities to understand how the young men who I had been interviewing developed a sense of being hard in ways that was profoundly contradictory and undermining. and the contradictions at the centre of hardness. Friends of mine were there were doing PhDs on issues around sexuality. One of my friends was doing a PhD which was looking at IVF and the way in which lesbians were excluded from IVF. So, gender and sexuality were pretty much in the foreground but masculinities as well as femininities and lesbian and gay identities were being talked about but, class was not really talked about all that much, at least not to the extent it had been a decade earlier. It didn't feel to me that class was as primary—and this is something I've come across in the sociological literature on class and class identities more recently. Race was certainly talked about and I hadn't done any thinking previously, I'm embarrassed to say, about issues of racialisation—which of course hadn't immediately impacted on me as a white person. Certainly, reading *The Empire Strikes Back* when I came to Cultural Studies, made me think about these issues. But the Centre was, when I was there, still a predominantly white environment. Identity politics was pretty prevalent there at that time, which fits with the wider context of cultural

theory and politics at the time. There was also a focus on popular cultural forms and processes and on looking at these with a poststructuralist lens.

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Interviewer: I was going to ask about whether there was a relationship between the kind of political/intellectual practices that were going on internally in the centre and in a broad political environment in Birmingham and beyond in the United Kingdom?

Respondent: And more generally I mean, I think, one of the criticisms that left theorists have of the 1980s and 1990s is the focus on identity politics and how, especially, with Thatcher's attacks on the miners that was occurring at the same time as Regan's attacks on the air traffic controllers, which, retrospectively, was really the beginnings of the neoliberal attack in the west. I didn't, and I don't believe that Cultural Studies, like much social and cultural theory at the time, was considering events happening in the south. I remember going to a Cultural Studies conference in the late 1980s or early 1990s where someone was giving a paper on the ways that recycling Body Shop plastic bottles was a political act and I remember thinking, 'What kind of politics is it to recycle Body Shop bottles? How green are you by doing that?' This happened around the same time that there was a Live Aid concert—in 1985—and I couldn't afford to go to it because it cost too much money and at Stuart Hall wrote an article, in the Guardian I think, about the political potential of Live Aid as a global radical movement. And I thought, 'This is not the beginning of a radical movement at all, this is a movement for middle class young people, that even I can't afford'. This was part of me feeling that cultural studies was getting away from the material basis of oppression and resistance in our culture.

Interviewer: Was going to, in a sense, it was like, going too far, down the route of kind of, everything that the, everything at the end of the day is political and we're forgetting about the wider Marxist political movement that it, kind of, came from?

Respondent: Yeah, and also because I do think that everything is political but, that doesn't necessarily mean it's going to be radically transformative and you can also feel good about engaging in small political acts, and I do think that small political acts are important, but . . . these acts need to be seen in a context of wider political structures and processes. So whilst Cultural Studies had, at its core, a commitment to a better world in which all were equal, I think that it lost its materialist basis, it did not consider as fully as it could have done—like much of the left at the time—the contradiction between the practices that it was analysing and the wider social, economic and political contexts in which they were located. Certainly Cultural Studies' usage of post structuralism was important to the development of cultural theory; about the ways that people internalise the disciplining processes that shape the self in a wider social world. It's just that being part of a society where everyone isn't equal and we all, to some extent, reproduce the hierarchies of the society that we live in. So, Cultural Studies, like a lot of other social science research and practice at that point in time, kind of got caught up a bit too much with identity politics and not enough with the ways that—and I know that hindsight is a great thing, and I was as complicit as my colleagues in this process, but there weren't as many studies as there could have been on trying to see, how can we subvert what Thatcherism is doing. How is it taking away possibilities for a sense of collectivity? I mean, Pierre Bourdieu said in 1998, 1999 that neoliberalism is a project of the erasure of the collective and, that's what was happening in the 1980s. I remember reading Thatcher, reading about Thatcher saying that, 'There's no such thing as society; there are only individuals and their families'. As soon as she said that, I thought, this is not an innocent statement, this is the proclamation of a point of view that is going to be realised. As I would now say, this was performative. Of course, that's what happened. I think those of us who were there, my PhD could have been a lot more political so, I have to say, I don't want to just blame others because my PhD was not as politicised as it could have been. It was, it went a lot further than it would have gone had I stayed in the US but, I think that people at cultural studies, to some extent, at the very least, I'm just thinking of Maureen McNeill reading this and saying, 'No this isn't the case Joyce, many of us remembered our working class backgrounds and kept hold of them,' and also tried to encourage class locations to be considered—

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- Interviewer: I spoke, I spoke to Maureen not long ago and she actually said that, even she said that she found it difficult to retain, because cultural studies was taking up so much of her time intellectually, emotionally and also politically, there were political battles that were being fought, at the Centre, but, in terms of the university's continuing encroachment onto cultural studies that she actually had very little time for anything else beyond the academy and, I think, what you're trying to say fits with her experiences as well.
- Respondent: Right, right. I think, yeah, academia is a drug really. It can be completely obsessive and if you wean yourself off it, and spend some of your time doing other things, by which I mean doing political work outside, you actually come to see some of its limits and its self importance. I believe, like Marx, Freire, Fanon, Gramsci, Sivanandan and others, that we need to link theory and practice, they must be harnessed. Theory for me is best developed in and through engaging in struggles. So, I think that the 1980s and 1990s was an era when many people on the left were not as connected to the wider politics in general and this includes Cultural Studies. And, again, if you're saying Maureen said that she didn't have the time and headspace to look at the wider context, I would say that I'm not surprised. The academy is so all consuming. You can spend every day of your life, every minute of every day, and you still feel that you haven't read as much as you want to do, as you should have done, and so, to make that link, the jump outside, is really, really difficult.
- Interviewer: Just finally, because I know you have got other things to get on with, firstly, to what extent as a student were you aware of the relationship between the centre and the university and then, retrospectively, from 2002 what were your perspectives on its subsequent closure?
- Respondent: While I was there, I mean I was there between 85 and probably 89 I kept ties to Cultural Studies and we had a campaign to save the Centre.
- Interviewer: So that was when it went from being the centre to the Department of Cultural Studies. That would have been, that was 1986. And that was when increasingly undergraduate students became (inaudible 00:42:12) rolled out. I remember on a much larger scale. So, you were campaigning at the time to save the centre in its previous form?
- Respondent: Yeah, yeah, we had a big letter writing campaign. We got lots of signatures from people all over the world. And then there was another campaign in the early to mid 1990s.
- Interviewer: I think that was when there was a merger between cultural studies and the department and sociology. Sociology was kind of, got rid of and then they merged it so it became the Department of Cultural Studies and Sociology.
- Respondent: Right, right, okay. So, I knew about that but I was not there then. And I think that, like Maureen, I didn't see these events in the wider context at the time. I do remember that from the time I came to this country there was an attack on Cultural Studies in the media as being fluffy, a Mickey Mouse course because it was thought to be so easy given its focus on popular culture, which, of course, was part of its focus but this focus was much more complex and multi-layered than the media and politicians suggested. But I didn't see that as the beginning of an attack on the university which now, retrospectively, I can certainly see that those were the beginnings of the attacks on the university because, I mean, Thatcher, one of Thatcher's first acts was within three days of coming to power, she axed £100,000 from the higher education budget and that was just, that was the first step and in the 1980s she introduced fees for international students. So, at that point in time, there was kind of an undercurrent that was going on that was really the beginning of higher education beginning being marketised and commodified. I think that like many others, I was one of those who was sleepwalking into the present. I'm not proud of it; I was part of NATFHE and am part of UCU and have been fighting government changes to HE, but retrospectively, I, like many others, could have done much more.
- Interviewer: So, do you think in a sense then, what happened to the Centre was, in one sense, kind of, emblematic of the structural changes that were shifting within higher education but also more broadly within, just, British society?

Respondent: Yeah, I think that's the case. That the closure of the Centre in 2002, this was an early closure relative to the attack that has come since. So, yeah, so I do think that it is indicative of these wider changes that were going on and, so, we do see the profound neoliberalising of the university now. I think in a few years time there won't necessarily be as many working class young people, minority young people, in higher education because they'll not be able to afford it and won't see the purpose of it which is sad but, I think higher education has also become so bastardised, so managerialised, lecturers are so over worked with higher student numbers and greater competition between universities, that they can't support students as much as they would like, as much as should happen, and, so, I do think that higher education is, well it's in crisis and it is under threat. I think its getting harder and harder for academics to survive in the academy and I think that's one of the reasons why a number of us are looking to other places to create other alternatives, parallel institutions at a time when formerly state funded institutions, like education, like the NHS, are coming under attack. To to end on a positive note, we need to fight against these things. We can't be complacent the way we have been. We can't fool ourselves. We must keep on fighting to try to help all people understand the way the world really is organised and to work, to believe that it is possible to change it, because, if we don't believe it is possible to change it, it's going to keep going in the same direction; we must keep that struggle going.

Interviewer: Thanks a lot.

[End of Transcript]