

# A Research Trajectory: Issues (until 2006)

# Research Projects: The Beginning

## **PhD 1980 - 1986: An Ethnographic Study of Young Women and their Experience of Caring Further Education**

Using Further Education as an institutional foci and tracing movement through broader cultural spaces the study explored how young, white, working class women became implicated in the construction of their own subjectivities in relation to wider structures of class, gender and race. The study demonstrates how, in this process, women implicate themselves in subordination and self-surveillance, but also provide free caring in areas where state provision has been cut. (SSRC funded)

Follow up: Sept. 1988-Nov. 1988: Follow-up study to doctoral research.

# Research Projects: The Beginning

## **Issues:**

- Using theory - compatibility (e.g. Althusser, Gramsci, Butler, Foucault, Bourdieu)
- Link theory to empirical
- Midwifery - ventriloquism
- Using concepts when participants challenge (e.g. class)
- Using themes (e.g. respectability) rather than categorisations
- Contradictions
- Subjectivity

## **Publications:**

Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable. London. Sage 1997

Feminist Ethnography, in Maynard and Purvis (1994) Researching Women's Lives. London. Taylor & Francis

Seeing Differently: Ethnography and Explanatory Power, in Australian Journal for Research in Education (1999) 26: 1: 33-55.

# Quantitative

## **1983 - 1984: The Educational and Vocational Choice of School Leavers**

This research produced a data bank by monitoring and recording the qualifications and labour market choices of all sixteen -year old school pupils in Cheshire. Use was made of SPSS computation through IBM mainframes. (ESRC funded £84,000) (published by Principal Investigator, Ian Smith, on Education and Vocational Choice).

### **Issues:**

- Using statistics, not using theory

# Anti-Racist Research

## April 1988 July 1988: Multi-Ethnic Needs in Hereford and Worcester Part One

This involved interviewing all managers and department heads in Hereford and Worcester Further Education Colleges to estimate the form and type of racism in existence in college in order to develop staff training programmes to fit local requirements. (LEA/GRIST funded: £26,000). Report published for LEA.

## Nov. 1988 - April 1989: Multi-Ethnic Educational Needs in Hereford and Worcester Part Two

This identified the needs of black students in Hereford and Worcester Further Education Colleges. Firstly, to inform the design and provision of staff development courses. Secondly, to establish a county network for the incorporation of this research in the review and design of curriculum materials. (LEA/GRIST £26,000). Report published for LEA.

### Issues:

- Policy based-developed teaching materials
- Talking back
- Researching the powerful
- Failure to publish but informed future work
- Informed concepts of investment and lack of alternatives for the powerful

# Moral Challenges

## **July - Dec. 1991: Sexual Awareness Amongst Young People in the North East**

Using innovative research methods, such as popular cultural questionnaires, and intensive interviewing with a sampled group of 16-24 year old young people, it generated issue understanding that was used to develop training materials for Further Education staff development on HIV/AIDS awareness. (Health Authority funded: £6,500).

### **Issues:**

- Innovative methods for 'excluded' audience
- Moral majority
- Huge access problems
- Developed material were unable to use
- Useful for future concept development (resistance and responsibility)
- Centrality of morality to power

# Popular Culture and Race

## **April, May, September 1992 : Women, 'Race' & Resistance in Music**

In New York, London, LA, Manchester. Interviewed performers and powerful women in the music industry to identify the sites, places and motivations for the production of popular feminism.

### **Issues:**

- Destroying women's power and position of judgement
- Competing masculinities
- Significance of prior historical representations and their take-up
- Significance of popular culture in mediating class/race/gender
- National differences in race politics
- Why I liked black feminists like Angela Davis

### **Publications:**

Two Minute Brother: Contestation Through Gender, 'Race' and Sexuality (1993) Innovation in Social Science Research. 6: 3: 299-322.

'Refusing to be Civilised, in H. Afshar and M. Maynard (eds.) The Dynamics of Race, and Gender. Basingstoke: Taylor & Francis.

# Media

- Interest in power always generated an interest in media
- Had already used media theory in thesis and work on race
- Came to see centrality of media for those who had no other access to knowledge of people different to themselves
- Also a historical context (1980s and early 1990s) when media central to the emergence of cultural studies
- Was asked to write textbook (delayed PhD publication)
- Experimented with writing style (craft, fun, polemic)

## **Publications:**

The Media (with John Mundy. London. Macmillan. 1992).

For Women Only, in F. Lloyd 'Madonna'. London. Batsford Press.

Lots of articles of the Magazine of Cultural Studies (e.g. A Spanking Good Time, music articles).

# Different Constraints

- Had to switch to research that fitted with teaching
- Fitted with attempts to ‘brand’ the type of feminism we were practising in academia at the time
- Contexts always crucial (Lancaster Women’s Studies)
- Centrality of methodology to knowledge production of any kind
- Citation and ethics are always issues

## **Publications:**

Feminist Cultural Theory: Process and Production: Manchester. Manchester University Press (1995). (involved all colleagues and shaped a ‘new’ area of feminist theory premised on culture but not separated from the material), included chapters by me on: Theorising, Ethics and Representation in Feminist Ethnography and Feminist Theory.

Situating the Production of Feminist Ethnography (1994) in M. Maynard and H. Afshar (eds.) Researching Women’s Lives from a Feminist Perspective.

Writing on ethnography continued: Seeing Differently: Ethnography and Explanatory Power. Australian Journal for Research in Education (1999) 26, 1.

Feminist Ethnography (2001) in Handbook of Ethnography (ed.) P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland and L. Lofland.

# Education

- Further Education was the location of my PhD research and one of the central sites in state power and regulation.
- Having given conference papers I was asked to write on areas (e.g postmodernism).

## **Publications:**

Postmodernism: What is all the Fuss About? (1991) *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 12, 2. 255-79.

The Limits of Neutrality: Feminist Research and the ERA (1994), in B. Troyna and D. Halpin (eds) *Researching Educational Policy: Ethical and Methodological Issues*, Lewes. Falmer. 115-35.

# Publishing: Impact of the RAE/RSE/REF

- The measurement of university research began in 1986 (introduced by Margaret Thatcher). It took place every 4 years. In 1992 it was consolidated and was supposedly used to rate research funding.
- A mechanism to allocate research funding to the elite.
- Became influential on what we could publish and where and pressure on for getting research funding.
- Failure to comply would lead to collective punishment of department/university.

## **Publications:**

Impact of the RAE/RSE/REF

# Gender: Masculinity

- Having always written about femininity, gender and feminist theory, I responded to the ‘new’ theories on masculinity by going back to my ethnographic research and interrogating it for data on masculinity. This was a debate with the current research issues in British Sociology of Education.

## **Publications:**

Challenging Masculinity and Using Sexuality (1991) British Journal of Sociology of Education. 12. 2: 127-41.

From this I was asked to give a variety of conference papers, which generated further publications:

Theories of Masculinities (1994) in Ahokes, P., Lahti, M. and Sihvonen, J.(eds) Discourses of Masculinity. Jyuaskylan Nykykulturia: Tutkimusyksikö: 13-36.

- Understanding masculinity was also useful for the work on race (Refusing to be civilised) where masculinity could not be ‘bracketed off’ from understandings of race and power.
- I became bored with ‘masculinity’ but found this theoretical grounding really useful later on in life when I engaged with theories of the self such as the ‘reflexive self’ and the ‘rational actor’ which almost fitted the old values of masculinity perfectly. Rarely is any knowledge wasted.

# Cultural Production

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- Unaware until I wrote this presentation I was clearly interested in various forms of cultural production (titles involved the 'cultural production of ethnography, process and production, etc.).

## Issues:

- Historical location
- Access to resources
- Conversations with theorists (what cultural capital available)
- Beginning to accumulate various different fields of knowledge that can be drawn upon; both specialising and expanding.
- The masculinity research, the methodology, the educational engagement all worked to locate cultural production, generating a critique of Paul Willis's work:

## Publications:

The Cultural Production of "Learning to Labour", in M. Barker and A. Beezer (1991) *Reading into Cultural Studies*. London. Routledge. 181-96.

# Autobiography

- The methodological understanding became more specific through a critique of autobiography. This combined a funded seminar series with teaching and current debates in feminist theory.

**September 1996 - August 1998 ESRC Seminar Competition Writing the Social Self (with Celia Lury).**

To explore contemporary contributions from feminist autobiographical work to understand how the production of the gendered self in social and cultural spaces is produced through textual materials (£10,000) (published as *Feminism and Autobiography* by Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield. London: Routledge).

# Autobiography continued...

## **Issues:**

- Alert to 'techniques for telling' as resources (e.g. Steedman) and the role of the interlocuter
- Centrality of narratives of 'escape'
- Different ways of telling that are not recognised
- Emerging again are issues of class, power and access to resources
- Does the technique make gender or is the technique already gendered?
- Generated interest in how the concept of the 'self' was produced and who was allowed one

## **Publications:**

Problems with reflexivity: difference between reflexive self and reflexive practice (in T. May (2003) *Issues in Qualitative Research*. London. Sage).

Chapter 7 in *Class, Self, Culture*: London. Routledge.

(see also Bridget Byrne (2003) *Reciting the Self: Narrative Representations of the Self in Qualitative Interviews*, in *Feminist Theory*)

# Institutional Power

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- Unaware until I wrote this presentation I was clearly interested in various forms of cultural production (titles involved the ‘cultural production of ethnography, process and production, etc.).
- Our academic work is as much a research project as our research projects.
- Working in Women’s Studies during the 1990s was a whole research and learning experience.
- Confronting issues of how power works in practice, ethics, politics, psychoanalysis.

## Publications:

Women's Studies in Britain in the 1990s. Entitlement Cultures and Institutional Constraints (1995). Women's Studies International Forum, 18. 4. 475-485; Women's Studies Network (1997).

# Smoking

## **June 1999 - Jan 2000: Representations of Smokers**

(Seedcorn funding, Faculty of Social Science, Lancaster University (with Professor Hilary Graham). A literature search and review of the state of research on smoking. This included all health promotion literature alongside TV and media representations. (FSS, £1,000).

### **Issues:**

- Issues: employing researchers
- Ubiquity of porn
- Centrality of opening new markets
- Power of glamour historically
- Research funding requires 'problems' therefore it produces and defines 'problems'
- Centrality of morality again
- Time to discuss research with colleagues

# Sexuality Research

## **May - August 1997: Sexual Citizenship: Space, Consumption, Law**

Seedcorn funding IWS Lancaster University (with Les Moran). This research generated pilot data for the following ESRC research proposal. It used three different focus groups (Lesbians, gay men and heterosexual women) to generate an issue based understanding of homophobic violence and the production of safer-space (Institute for Women's Studies £2,000).

**May 1998 - 2001: Violence, Sexuality, Space: A Study of the Practical and Policy Context of Sustainable Safe Public Places** (Principal Investigator with Les Moran). The study explored how safer places are generated and maintained for three different groups (gay men, lesbians and heterosexual women) in two different geographical locations (Manchester and Lancaster). It uses multi methods and generated innovative methods of feedback of research results to interested stakeholder groups, policy makers and community organisations. (ESRC £143,000).

# Sexuality Research continued...

## **Publications:**

- Sexuality and the Politics of Violence and Safety (2004) London. Routledge.
- The Toilet Paper: Femininity, Class and Misrecognition (Women's Studies International Forum. (2001) 24, nos 2-3: 295-307.
- Property, Boundary, Exclusion: Making Sense of Heterocentric Violence and Safer Spaces (with Les Moran) Social and Cultural Geography (2001) vol 2: 4: 407-420.
- The Property of Safety (with Les Moran) Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law (2001) 23: 4: 379-393.
- The Formation of Fear in Gay Pace: the 'Straight' Story (with Les Moran, Karen Corteen and Paul Tyrer) Capital and Class (2003) 80. 2003. pp. 173-199.
- Safety Talk, Violence and Laughter: Methodological Reflections on Focus Groups in Violence Research (with Les Moran, Paul Tyrer and Karen Corteen), in R. M. Lee and E. A. Stanko (2003) Researching Violence: Essays on Methodology and Measurement. London. Routledge. Pp. 107-126 (ISBN: 0-415-30132-7).

# Issues: Managing Research

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## **Publications:**

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# Issues: Sexuality Research

- How to translate to policy (who to ‘represent?’)
- Multi-method-contradictions
- Statistical enlightenment
- Role of representation eg TV (Queer as Folk) in spatial knowledge, reality construction and evidence
- Use of violence as a resource (turning the state against itself )
- Centrality of ambivalence
- Comfort rather than violence

# Radio

## **February 2003 - Regenerating Communities through Radio: A case study of Radio Regen**

(funded by Manchester City Council + European Social Fund). The study involves 3 stages. The first is an organizational evaluation, examining work culture and how this impacts upon training policy and stations output. The second examines training and volunteers and the third is a community evaluation to understand how both the former two stages of analysis can be used to understand the impact of the Radio stations on their local community.

### **Issues:**

- Organisation central (personalities)
- Dynamic of voluntary work
- Interview as therapy
- Competing interests (how to document/damage limitation)
- Community/participation/technology investments (about class/projected subjectivity)
- Spatial pathology
- Political correctness and fear
- Clear remit central
- Drew on earlier work on media, community, methodology

# Feminism after Bourdieu

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- Edited book with Lisa Adkins (Blackwell 2005). Chapters can be downloaded via the Sociological Review
- Aware of new interest in Bourdieu that overlooked a lot of the feminist work already in existence
- Making an intervention in the masculine knowledge
- Problem of writing myself into a critique

# Making Class Through the Televised Self

- Helen Wood has worked on developing an interactive methodology (how people speak to back the TV).
- Many recent theories assume that a new sort of self has come into existence: reflexive, individualised, prosthetic, omnivorous.
- Along with new theories on the importance of subjectivity e.g intimate citizenship (Berlant); governing the soul (Rose); Extraordinary subjectivity (Dovey); well-tempered self (Miller); DIY citizenship (Hartley).
- We wanted to put these theories to the test.

# Summary

- Very different type of research practices (individual, group)
- Very different methodologies all offer different access to knowledge
- Different theoretical understandings can all contribute and challenge prior knowledge
- Importance of context (and place of work- institutional power, conversations, history of theory/ideas)
- Difficulty of real interdisciplinarity, but great benefits
- How each form of research produces new questions to ask (often when project over and analysis/writing -up begins)
- Link between research and teaching
- How other people notice things about your research (and strengths and weaknesses) that you do not
- Early theory often returns to haunt you (e.g. Althusser)
- Time is absolutely central – writing is thinking