

Interviewee: Jim Valentine, Dr  
UoS Dates: 1974 – 2005  
Role(s): 1974 – 2000 Lecturer in Sociology and Social Policy  
2000 – 2005 Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Social Policy  
2001 – 2005 Project Officer (Academic) in  
Information Services (part secondment)  
2005 – 2014 Honorary Senior Research Fellow in  
Applied Social Science



## Interview summary:

### *Summary of content; with time (min:secs)*

**Start 00:01** – JV was doing PhD and part-time teaching in Durham. Avoided applying for posts in South-East and Midlands of England. Withdrew application for Lectureship at Newcastle Polytechnic as teaching load would not allow completion of PhD.

**06:23** – Came for interview at Stirling on 29 May 1974, wonderful campus on sunny day. Taken round University by Russell Dobash: he and Rebecca Dobash were lecturers in Department. Three lectureships to be appointed: 2 in Sociology (JV and Sue Nowikowski), 1 in Social Work (Steve McGrail). Remembers interview panel, including Sheila Mitchell and Duncan Timms, and questions. A factor in appointment may have been need to supervise new PhD student (Ruth Waterhouse) on Women in Literature, an area of JV's research. Heard news of appointment via neighbour's phone. Later had to buy phone to maintain communication with Haber (partner): 10% of salary on phone calls.

**12:05** – First accommodation was in caravan, Carse of Lecropt. Sad seeing Haber drive away. First year was cold, overworked and anxious. Probationary period of three years for new lecturers was supposed to mean reduced workload, but not in practice reduced. Interested in structure of degree programmes: appointed to Policy Committee (sub-committee of Subject Committee). Subject Committee meetings were arenas for healthy conflict (e.g. about curriculum), managed well by Duncan Timms: decisions through consensus rather than votes.

**18:54** – University was under threat and needed more students, since the reduction in applications in the aftermath of Queen's Visit. In Subject Committee people joked: 'last in, first out', with implied threat.

**21:09** – Pressure to complete PhD in addition to new teaching and administration, that included preparation for external review of degree programmes, which recommended replacement of separate Single Honours programmes in Sociology and in Social Policy by new Single Honours in 'Sociology and Social Policy'.

<p><b>23:32</b> – JV's early teaching was in a Part-One unit and also in core Semester 4 unit on Sociological Theory with Stewart Butts, who later moved Department: loss of staff to subjects related to burgeoning Business Studies. JV's first lecture was a big lecture in Logie Lecture Theatre: nerves and how coped.</p>
<p><b>27:25</b> – 4711 Social Differentiation was designed by team including Sheila Mitchell, Alison Bowes and JV. This unit continued successfully for decades. Gender and age became even more central to the subject, while deviance became seen as less central, except through a narrower focus on crime/criminology. Sheila Mitchell was supportive professionally and socially. After Stewart Butts left for Business Studies, JV taught Sociological Theory on his own. Ray Kent left for Marketing and Richard Bland left for Computing Science: Richard had taught Social Stratification.</p>
<p><b>33:08</b> – JV was living in cold caravan, rats underneath. In June 1975 obtained one bedroom house through Scottish Special Housing Association as second-class incoming worker. Only leisure was one hour a week watching 'I Claudius'. Successfully completed PhD in 1976. Started new unit on Sociology of Culture.</p>
<p><b>39:46</b> – Parties were thrown by Russell and Rebecca Dobash, Sue Nowikowski and Duncan Timms. People met included Janka Malkowska (artist), Jose de Unamuno (wife of David Robertson in Spanish). Dancing in Duncan and Elizabeth Timms' house.</p>
<p><b>43:27</b> – Macho atmosphere in Subject Committee until some left the University and more women came. JV never had to hide partner. Only directly negative statement on homosexuality was from anthropologist.</p>
<p><b>47:45</b> – Social anthropology and comparative sociology were incorporated into Social Differentiation unit, to reflect on own society in the context of other societies, encouraging a healthy scepticism, and the doubting of what seems fixed: we could be different.</p>
<p><b>50:41</b> – Degree structure meant students took at least three subjects at first: opportunity to try new subjects. Driving force behind JV's administrative work was to maintain/increase the flexibility enabled by the semester system: continued this approach when seconded to Student System Project. Earlier, had tried to develop a wider range of Combined Honours programmes. English and Sociology blocked by Tommy Dunn but successfully negotiated with John Drakakis. Psychology and Sociology was popular, but more difficult for students as Social Psychology was underrated.</p>
<p><b>57:52</b> – Autonomy of Departments and individuals was considerable. Disciplinary autonomy was supported by External Examiner system. As an individual, JV had some autonomy in constructing units related to research interests, such as Sociology of Culture - a field that eventually became too large to encompass.</p>
<p><b>1:02:11</b> – Rationalisation of teaching due to cuts in 1980s: teaching larger numbers. JV and Alison Bowes fought to maintain dissertations.</p>
<p><b>1:04:39</b> – As Director of Undergraduate Programmes, JV increased number of Combined Honours programmes: more than 30 with Sociology and Social Policy, negotiated through Departments and Faculty. New Principals might try to make their mark by changing organisational structure, renaming Schools, Faculties, Departments etc. Abolition of Faculties around 2004 meant greater centralisation. Human Sciences had included Applied Social Science, Psychology, Education, later Nursing.</p>
<p><b>1:09:38</b> Phases of JV's time at Stirling: tough first quarter, 1974 – 1982. At outset had half a week's induction into how to teach by chemistry lecturer. JV's middle period, 1982 – 1997, was very happy time, with teaching at the core, and administration focused on flexibility and getting students through interesting programmes. Final quarter 1997 – 2005 was happiest time of all.</p>
<p><b>1:12:23</b> – Escapes during the first phase: swimming, or even visit to the dentist. Exam marking pressure up to Christmas, and a fortunate break to watch snowflakes. Rock buns.</p>
<p><b>1:16:14</b> – Sabbatical leave was linked to semester system: paid for each other's sabbatical semester by working harder for the other six semesters. First sabbatical (1978) in India (British Council scheme for Younger Scientists and Social Scientists, including stay at Santiniketan founded by Tagore) and Japan: social organisation of dance. Next sabbatical (1981) was funded by British Academy exchange's programme with the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.</p>

<p><b>1:21:25</b> – JV's research as 'science' fits the broader Germanic concept of Geisteswissenschaft or science of the mind, spirit or meaning, cultural sciences, rather than Naturwissenschaft, a natural science approach. Max Weber made distinction between natural and social sciences, and between science and politics.</p>
<p><b>1:22:47</b> – Although JV did not want to return from 1981 sabbatical in Japan, the following year marks the beginning of a new positive phase, inspired by a set of mature students. A student-centred approach to teaching starts from where they are and explores a body of knowledge to expand and challenge their perspectives. Virtues of Stirling: flexibility and opening access. Students who later became friends.</p>
<p><b>1:28:38</b> – Stirling had less of a division between staff and students: common space; behaviour and appearance belied status distinction. Went once to Staff Club – never again. Various views on whether common space was good for students, but it was good for staff. Two-way learning exchange with a particularly responsive set of students.</p>
<p><b>1:33:21</b> – Japanese Culture and Society (1984) was first course of its kind in Scotland: distinct from Japanese Studies, whose focus was more narrowly on business, though Joy Hendry was a prominent anthropologist who came briefly, and Brian Bocking was appointed and taught Japanese religions. Stirling did not sufficiently appreciate such stars.</p>
<p><b>1:37:12</b> – Examples of student contributions to units. On Japanese Culture and Society, students debated, e.g., the virtues of arranged marriage. Took Japanese concepts to reflect back on own society. JV avoided exoticising by drawing parallels between Japan and UK. Very popular option and several were motivated to go thereafter on the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme.</p>
<p><b>1:41:50</b> – These options were popular because learning was fun, so students more highly motivated.</p>
<p><b>1:43:22</b> – On Sociology of Culture, students were asked to come as a subculture: one student did complete makeover, came along as a punk, and observed reactions. Suzy Angus, now teaching Film &amp; Media Studies, attended the unit as an undergraduate, and Mick Smith as a postgrad (PhD in Environmental Philosophy).</p>
<p><b>1:46:26</b> – Sociological Theory, although abstract, can be related to students too. On Weber's study of the Protestant ethic, a sole student, from another culture, reported never having felt work guilt. In a lecture on feminism, the whole class were encouraged to sing along and deconstruct 'You make me feel like a natural woman' (Aretha Franklin).</p>
<p><b>1:50:50</b> – Monitoring and assessment, in addition to External Examiner system. Teaching Quality Assessment: in Sociological Theory, assessed lecture was on Durkheim's 'social facts'. On the way to lecture hall, important to gear up, especially if less appealing topic (e.g. phenomenology): became advocate for each successive theoretical approach. On the way to assessed lecture, the external assessor said teaching theory was murder: JV disagreed.</p>
<p><b>1:54:54</b> – Research Assessment Exercise: selling souls for stars. Over-reaction of some staff to loss of star (5 instead of 5*). Artificial research groupings, based on natural science group research model. Research on marginality: marginalised in first RAE and ironically central to next RAE.</p>
<p><b>1:58:46</b> – Staff appraisal was counter-productive. 'Virtus Laudata Crescit', virtue praised grows, is good guide to assessment: wrap criticism in an encouragement of the positive, and avoid de-motivating. Universities as greedy institutions, linked to the notion of the privileged and devoted academic, led to flaunting of over-work and becoming martyrs for the cause. Monitoring through timesheets revealed overwork. Play the game, but don't believe in it.</p>
<p><b>2:05:44</b> – De-motivating incident, after 4<sup>th</sup> funded visit to Japan in 1996, marked beginning of happy last quarter at University, through limiting work hours.</p>
<p><b>2:10:07</b> – Importance of support staff to the way the University felt: a friendly place. Worked closely with the Library and on Library Users Group. Mentions Gordon Peacock (Librarian), Carolyn Rowlinson, Robin Davis, subject librarians Gordon Willis, Lynne Mitchell, Valerie Wells, Val Hamilton. Lynne Mitchell's oral history for OurStory Scotland shortly before death: staff, friends and family celebrated her life at funeral.</p>
<p><b>2:14:35</b> – Administrative and secretarial staff in the Department were wonderfully supportive: mentions Dorothy Anderson, Peggy Shatwell, Jacqui Harrop, Dorothy Kelly, Sally Armstrong-Payne, Sarah Pugh. Often talked with cleaners in evening as JV stayed on at work: spoke about death of Colin Bell, a tragic loss of a</p>

radical Principal with vision, yet approachable. Spoke with him about Stirling's links with Waseda University: Professor Yoichi Watanabe was visiting researcher at Stirling, and gave SURSA oral history interview.
<b>2:17:40</b> – Monica Cessford (Human Sciences) was joy to work with, finding a way through Stirling's complicated programmes. Example of local mature student taking final unit and achieving General Degree.
<b>2:20:30</b> – Death of mature student advisee, whose son was also student at Stirling. Attended funeral as representative of Department/Faculty, and invited to bear coffin.
<b>2:23:06</b> – Good relations with students depended on seeing things from their perspective, in their interests. Student choice of dissertation topic: examples of study of go-go dancers in Edinburgh, and Gill McColgan's dissertation on pets as companion animals: she bravely agreed for her dissertation supervision to be assessed in TQA: she went on to PhD and research post in Dementia Studies at Stirling, and became friend.
<b>2:27:56</b> – Other PhD students who became friends: Ruth Waterhouse, Bill Munro (and partner Kirsten Stalker) and Julie Brownlie (JV was internal examiner). Julie took over teaching on Sociological Theory during JV's secondment.
<b>2:31:36</b> – Walking round the loch with friends in Housing Studies: Mary Taylor and Douglas Robertson: Douglas and JV with open doors across the corridor. Staff with less open doors, and greater absence, when moved from Cottrell to new Colin Bell building (2003), coinciding with IT enabling remote access: less social interaction. Coffee room could lead to cross-fertilisation of ideas (such as role of wrapping in discriminatory language) amongst diverse staff in large department: e.g. Ian McIntosh, Sam Punch, Murna Downs, Aileen Barclay. Jochen Clasen continued the communal coffee tradition in the new building, until stopped by cuts.
<b>2:40:18</b> – Annual escapes to Spain and Harris. On one Harris trip could not escape mentally, as preoccupied by a redesigned system of calculating student grades that would lead to students in between grades being rounded down rather than up: arguing against this was seen by higher levels as being 'soft on students'.
<b>2:44:56</b> – Preparing for retirement: disposing of material, and buying extra years of pension.
<b>2:47:28</b> – Last quarter of time at the University began 1997: happiest time. Walking to work. New committees included Communication Through the Arts Advisory Group, with Mary Marshall, Head of Dementia Centre, and lead researcher John Killick.
<b>2:50:07</b> – Macrobert Committee, prefigured in early days by being Secretary of Film Circle, and on Management Committee of Stirling Film Theatre at Macrobert, with Grahame Smith and Ian Lockerbie. Macrobert Committee was mostly concerned with money: apart from Liz Moran, Director of Macrobert, only Doris Littlejohn and JV would talk about content and quality, and instituted at end of each meeting a review of what was showing at other theatres in central Scotland. Theatre was a further advantage of living in Scotland, along with changing political situation.
<b>2:54:59</b> – Training as Bullying and Harassment Adviser: people seeking advice came from all sections of the University. Declining support for scheme, though Ginnie Willis and JV gave talk to potential Advisers (2005).
<b>2:59:17</b> – Part secondment from 2001 as Project Officer (Academic) to Student System Project, which developed software to enable student registration without reducing student choice and flexibility. JV kept postgraduate supervision, but without undergraduate teaching: missed teaching, but less stress, moving towards retirement. JV's boss in Student System Project was Kathy McCabe, and she and her staff were very supportive and non-discriminatory. Civil Partnership 2005: Kathy McCabe sent congratulations. University was always a privileged place to be in relation to LGBT issues.
<b>3:05:48</b> – Research moved from representations and naming/euphemising of marginalised communities to how they could represent themselves and narrate their own lives. Looked at how to collect, archive and represent LGBT people's 'neglected narratives', which became research group in Department. Co-founded OurStory Scotland in 2002. Continues this work in retirement, and as Honorary Senior Research Fellow till 2014: 40 years since initial appointment. With Angela Smith, co-founded University of Stirling Oral History.
<b>3:11:55</b> – Saw how lucky had been, as final year brought centralisation and as Sue Tester stepped down as Head of Section, so felt was leaving at right time. Happiness at Stirling from friends, exploring ideas with students, and the research autonomy which led on to current voluntary work with marginalised community.
<b>[Ends 3:16:53]</b>

<b>Interview No:</b>	SURSA OH / 108	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SURSA</b> University of Stirling Stirling FK9 4LA</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><a href="mailto:info@sursa.org.uk">info@sursa.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.sursa.org.uk">www.sursa.org.uk</a></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SURSA</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Oral History</p>
<b>Interviewed by:</b>	Mary Taylor		
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<b>Summary completed by:</b>	Jim Valentine		
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