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# Interview with Ian McCannah

## Part 3: the overall experience

**Well we're talk about that later, yes.**

Okay. I thought that it was part of a 10-year exercise so that they could see that any relative change in poverty, and then they would take that to the relevant government department and say this is what we've found and you need to address this, that and the other. So I felt that it was, particularly at LSE, given, in those days I'm sure now, that there were very strong links to government, and that it would have been used as a means of advising government.

**But did you ever find that out, were you kind of?**

No.

**And would there have been a communication; was there a way if you'd wanted to find out?**

Well I suppose if I'd done sociology as a degree and I'd stayed in academia then I possibly would have seen it. Yes, perhaps I would have seen more of its end result, if any, but no.

**And I mean it sounds like there wasn't, but was there any opportunity to get involved in writing about it or kind of input into the analysis stage had you wanted to do that?**

No. Well I suppose you could have done, if I'd been in the sociology department. If I was doing an MA or something, there may have been, but we had our subjects that we had to cover, and I don't think there was too much scope for deviation from the course to do some more like research or written work on a subject that's not within the degree.

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**I'm sure you had plenty to do on the course of your regular degree, and thinking back on the surveys, you know, on your experience of doing the fieldwork, is there anything in reflection you think could have been done differently or anything that you think worked particularly well either in terms of the survey or your experience of it?**

Well, I don't know, just I've never really thought about it until you raised the question. It seemed to me a very expensive project. I think it must have cost a lot of money given the way it was conducted across the country and involving students. I think that possibly more mature students who had sociology degrees may be more appropriate to interview, just looking back now, that we were basically thrown out into the field with no real experience, and I'm not entire sure we knew quite what we were looking for. Then perhaps that was better that we were completely objective really. We were not subjective in our views, we didn't make any judgements, and we weren't trying to tailor things towards certain outcomes. I don't know, but it struck me as being a pretty expensive exercise. Very diversified across the country, I suspect, but perhaps that has to be in order to get the proper results and well perhaps students were cheaper labour than more qualified research people, I don't know.

**Yes, but actually it is an interesting point you raised at the very start that actually and possibly in the range of summer work you could have taken on this was a relatively lucrative piece of work to have done.**

Don't want to underplay that too much.

**Yes, no well I mean I think it's...**

That and you've got to be honest on these things.

**Yes, and, you know, I think that if people were appropriately remunerated is not a bad thing. So, and I mean thinking more widely, do you have any sense of what the impact of the study kind of politically or socially, you said that, you know, the vision was that it would influence government and they would have a solid kind of body of evidence over time to do that. Did you have any sense of the actual impact of this study once it finished, or did you know anything about it when it came out?**

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None at all - when did it come out?

**It came out about, the book came out about 10 years later.**

10 years?

**Yes, I mean there was impact that came from the work before then, but it's a really large and comprehensive one, which I can show you if you'd like to see it.**

Be interested to see it yes.

**Yes, great. Now I've taken you back a bit, anything else at all that occurs to you about the experience to kind of sum it up or to add to what you've already said?**

I'd like to say there is, but really until I was contacted by Roz, I really forgotten about it quite frankly. It was not a bit part of my life and yes I'd rather forgotten about it to be honest.

**Yes, great.**

But no it's an interesting experience, I'm glad I did it, but it didn't lead onto anything else you see. It wasn't part of a career or. It was a summer job basically.

**Yes, thank you.**

I wish I could be more as I say altruistic about it so.

**No, but actually I mean this is really important data for us to have a kind of how the various different routes people came into the work, that's really given us a real flavour of what it was like to be there.**

Yes, be interesting to know how people were selected. I think it was pretty ad hoc to be honest, but perhaps it wasn't, I don't know.

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**Actually that is an interesting, now that we've spoken for a little bit, I mean are there any questions that sort of come to your mind that you would like to know the answer to now?**

What I'd like know, really I suppose listening to you, is on what basis were people selected to do the interviews. I suspect a notice went up somewhere and Abel-Smith said, you know, you're in my seminar is anybody interested? But that may not be the case. Or perhaps he approached us individually. If he thought that we were suitable material, may have seen it in LSE magazine, I just can't remember where I saw the advert, or how I was approached.

**Well when we find out more about that we'll certainly let you know.**

Good.

**Thank you so much for your time Ian.**

A pleasure, a pleasure, yes.

**That's been really, really helpful. Thank you.**

Good, hope you get some good results.

**Well we've already got some really great data so it's fantastic.**