Teacher Identities and Agency:
A Study of the Use of a Persuasive Life History Approach in Educational Research

(Volume 2 of 2)

by

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* A Study of the Use of a Persuasive Life History Approach in Educational Research (Volume 2 of 2)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this study has been a labour of love for me. I know that. It has, perhaps, been hard labour for those closest to me. I know that, too. I know also that this thesis would not have been possible in any way without the love, support and encouragement of my wife, Joanne, and also my children, Meghan and Michael; you cannot begin to imagine how important you have been and are to me. This thesis is dedicated to you three; it has to be.... Without you, it simply would not have been.

Thanks to my mum and dad. Your life journey has made this story possible. Your story is my story; it guides me in everything I do. Thanks, also, Charles, for being there and to other family members whose names are too numerous to mention here.

For the reader who manages to get beyond this acknowledgements page, you will discern my sense of indebtedness to many other scholars who have helped me, one way or another, along the way. Clive Harris, Muhammad Anwar, Zig Layton-Henry, Marlene Morrison, David Mason and Linda Evans have provided helpful guidance and encouragement to me over a number years. However, in getting me through this particular journey, I must express my very deep gratitude to my research supervisors – Wendy Robinson and Jim Campbell – who kept me on track; thanks to you both for your insightful and friendly guidance and encouragement when I needed it most.
I wish to express my thanks to colleagues at the NASUWT who have given practical support (and hard cash!) during the course of this study; particularly Jerry Bartlett, Chris Keates, Jennifer Moses, Nigel de Gruchy, and, the late, Eamonn O'Kane, whose integrity, insight, intellect and inspiration I, for one, miss greatly.

Finally, my thanks to "Jay" whose story is featured here. I hope that I have done justice to your story and that this has been as worthwhile a journey for you as it has been for me.

DECLARATION

I, Patrick Roger Roach, as sole author of this work, declare that this thesis is my own work which has not been used or published before. I confirm that the thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other university or institution.
ABSTRACT

The use of life history approaches in educational research has become increasingly fashionable. However, interest in exploring teachers' stories has met with resistance, largely, though not exclusively, on the grounds that some educational life history studies have prevented informed third party interrogation and validation. The life historian's interest in democratising the Academy has been thrown back onto the life historian with the charge that the life historian's practice has been undemocratic and unrepresentative. At the same time, the quest for 'giving voice' in educational research has provoked a desire to critique the power of researchers in the production of educational knowledge and to interrogate the practices within the knowledge factory.

This thesis provides a study of re-presentations in educational life history research. It examines critically previous scholarship and identifies a series of principles for the conduct of persuasive educational life history study. In exploring the use of a persuasive educational life history approach, this study applies a conceptualisation of persuasiveness which recognises the personal and political nature of educational research practice. The research takes as its starting point a particular interest in the lives of black men teachers.

In advocating the pursuit of a persuasive life history approach, this thesis is presented in two volumes: volume 1 contains the main substantive thesis; volume 2 contains key materials to complement and underpin the arguments set out in volume 1. The form of representation applied here seeks to enable the reader to evaluate this research story and to participate in an extended dialogue about the reading of the teacher's life story presented here.

The thesis lends credence to the contention that the teacher's professionalism orientation, identity and agency are historically and biographically contingent whilst also reflective of formal and informal processes of professionalisation and institutionalisation. The study suggests that the process of understanding the teacher's professional identity and agency is contingent upon the contexts in which story telling occurs. The study argues that teaching and research practice should provide space for self re-presentation.
APPENDIX 1: TIME LINE

About myself

My name is Jay. I currently live in Birmingham, England. I was born in 1972. I was born in Bromsgrove, England. I was brought up in Redditch, Worcestershire, England.

About my father and my mother

My father is Vinton. My father was born in 1940, Jamaica. My father's occupation was/is a Caretaker.

When I was growing up I viewed my father as a very busy, strict man, who never had time to pay his children attention. As we grew up he changed and started to become more open and interested in us. As we grew we began to see he was a very funny man with a keen sense of humour. Nowadays he is very much involved in the lives of his grand children. Spending lots of time with them.

My mother is Gwen. My mother was born in 1945, Jamaica. My mother's occupation was/is a Shop Assistant.
I would describe my mother as a very kind woman, who always put her children and others before herself. Hardworking, taking on two jobs in order to ensure that there was always enough food on the table. Always taking an active interest in the church and joining in with many of their social activities.

I would like to add the following points about my upbringing which I think are important. It was very hard for my parents when they first moved to England, as they were both very young. Also, like many other women at the time my mother had to leave a son in Jamaica with her mother.

In my opinion they faced additional difficulties by choosing to live in such a small place as Redditch in 1950's. However, they did have the support of having a few siblings also settling there.

My family and friends

I am currently single, living in a two bed roomed end of terrace house on my own. I have no children.

My brother(s) and sister(s) are:
Colin – 1962 - farmer
David – 1964 - Caretaker
Debbie – 1966 – registered nurse
Malcolm – 1968 – Senior manager
Emma – 1980 – Student

My grandparents are/were farmers in Jamaica

I would like to add the following points about my family which I think are important. All apart from one member of the family started work and then went back to fulltime education later on. Although our parents desperately wanted us all to stay on at school. My eldest brother is dyslexic, but this wasn’t discovered until he was in his early 20’s.

My best/closest friends are.....

Dave – 27 – Birmingham
Toni – 27 – Worcester
Matt – 31 – Birmingham
Russell – 30 – Coventry
Jude – 26 – Birmingham
My education

I attended the following schools between the ages of 5 and 18 were

- A High School - Redditch
- B Middle school - Redditch
- S Middle School - Redditch
- S Primary School - Redditch
- B Primary School - Redditch

My favourite subjects whilst at school were History and Geography

My favourite teachers whilst at school were

Miss Jones – A High School, 24
Mr Zablocki – A High School, 32

My least favourite teacher(s) whilst at school was a reception class
teacher – S Primary School – who was 56. One of my first memories
is of being really embarrassed by my reception school teacher. This
knocked my confidence quite a lot.

When I was a child/young person, I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A TEACHER

Becoming a teacher

Before becoming a teacher, I was an Adjudication Officer for the Benefits Agency, Birmingham. My duties were mainly administrative for Jobseekers Allowance. I first started working for them when I was 17! And left when I was 29!

Before becoming a teacher, I did no unpaid or voluntary work.

I would like to add the following points about my life before becoming a teacher which I think are important. As I was a mature student with a mortgage, I had to work during the time I was both doing my degree and my PGCE.
My teaching career to date is as follows. I am currently an NQT. Started in September 2002. I teach ICT and Business Studies to 11-16 year olds at Mast House School, Birmingham.

I first decided to become a teacher in 1984. I decided to become a teacher because I enjoyed being with young people; I thought that there were not enough Black teachers; and I saw it as an exciting and worth while career.

My job

My current job is classroom teacher at Mast House School. I have a full time, permanent post.

The main responsibilities of my current job are preparation and delivery of Key stage 3 and 4 ICT, preparation and delivery of Key stage 4 Business Studies and Form Tutor for Year 7.

I would describe the school in which I currently work in the following terms:

* High number of pupils that have Free School Meals
- High proportion of Ethnic Minorities
- Located in the Inner Cities
- Over 750 pupils on the roll

I would describe the classes I teach in the following terms:

- A number of pupils present some very challenging behaviour
- High Number of pupils with Special Educational Needs
- High number of pupils who English is a second language
- Some pupils very demotivated

In my job as a teacher, I enjoy those times when you truly feel that you have made a difference and pupils understand what you are teaching them. I enjoy the company and support of my colleagues and the feel of being part of something good.

In my job as a teacher, I least enjoy poor behaviour and other people not being organised!!

I would like to add the following points about my job which I think are important. I feel well supported by my line management.
My interests

I am a member of NASUWT.

I am not a member of any political organisations.

I am not a member of any voluntary, charitable or religious bodies.

My main pastimes, hobbies, interests and pursuits include socialising with friends, gardening, DIY, gym and general keep fit, and cooking.

My life inside/outside teaching

The events/things that have been most important in my life have included:

- Decision to go to university
- Graduation
- Being accepted at Warwick University
- Buying my First House
- Passing my driving test
• Spending time with school friends, both in and out of school
• Birth of Nephews and Nieces

In my life today, I most enjoy family, friends, Gym and work.

In my life today, I least enjoy house work and thinking about money.

In my life today, I would like to pay mortgage off!! I would like to be more practical and be motivated more of the time.

I would describe myself as friendly, loyal, humorous, approachable, impulsive and caring

My future career ambitions/aspirations are to progress to deputy head and to move out of the city and work in a Middle School.

My future life aspirations are to do work on the house and take some additional ICT courses.
About this research

I would like to make the following comments about the process of completing the time line questionnaire......

I would like to note the following points for future discussion in the research......
APPENDIX 2: JAY - LIFE STORY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT AND THEMATIC CODING

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<tr>
<th>Line Nos.</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Part One</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Interviewer: Tell me the story of your life</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>J: I was born in 1972 in Bromsgrove which is a small town just outside of Birmingham, it's in Worcestershire. I grew up in Redditch, near the city centre. Erm... two brothers, two sisters in England, one in Jamaica. When I was three I went to nursery, just at the top of the road with one of my best friends who... should be on the list somewhere. Then we both went to primary school together...</td>
<td>A B H I L</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>erm... I remember my first day at primary school when I was really embarrassed. We were in class, in reception class. Most of the kids knew the alphabet, but I didn't know it, and the teacher made me stand in the middle of the room looking at the board to try and remember the alphabet. I felt really</td>
<td></td>
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embarrassed. I never really was confident in
the classroom after that.

Then my sister was born. Then we moved
house and I moved primary school. At my
first primary school most of my friends were
white. At the second school I had more
black and Asian friends.

We were quite poor. My parents had
working class jobs. When I went into
secondary school my dad was made
redundant from an aluminium factory which
caused a lot of problems because we'd just
moved house as well so we were quite
strapped for cash.

[pause]

For some reason I wasn't happy at the
secondary school. I just didn't get on there, I
just didn't like it. So in the third year of
middle school I transferred back to the
middle school which was my original primary
school. But my mum got the year wrong that
I was in. She thought I was in the second
year. She thought I was in the first year, but
I was in the second year. So, they
transferred me across, and er they tried to
put me in the first year ... [laughs] They'd all
gone on a trip for a couple of days so I
ended up in the first year. I really enjoyed it
actually. I enjoyed sports and music. Most of
my friends... Most of the pupils were, there
were only five black pupils, two Asian
people there. Nearly all my friends were,
were white.
I quite enjoyed that. Then I transferred with
them all to high school. I did have.... I hung
around with black people outside of school. I
had lots of cousins who lived nearby, and
things like that. Because I wasn't going to
school with them – they were all going to a
high school which was completely on the
other side of town, I didn't really see them
that much. So...
I started working in an office... no
McDonalds when I was sixteen [pause]
Then I left there and worked in an office as a returns officer. Although I always wanted to be a teacher at that stage I wasn't ready to remain in education. I did that for about a year. And at the Job Centre there was a job to actually work at the Job Centre, and the woman behind the counter said, Oh, you'll never get that job. So I said to her, I bet you I will. So I applied for it and went all out to get it and I got it, so I was quite pleased about that. And I stayed there for twelve years.

After about six years I decided I was ready for education again. So I worked part year at the Benefits Agency, about 20 weeks and then I did a full time Bachelor of Arts, Business Admin honours at UCE. The first year was the HND and then I transferred to do the degree. I had a distinction on that. I loved University. I wish I was still there. [laughs] Wonderful time! And then, part way through I thought perhaps, yes, I could go
into teaching. I had interviews at Thomas Telford and Holyhead school in Birmingham, yeah. But luckily I didn’t get... I don’t think I would have got on with either of the courses. At the time I remember thinking Oh, God, no, but it really was good luck, good fortune that I didn’t because I got offered a place at Warwick which was by far the better establishment out of all of them. And I got on great with everybody on the course. It was really relaxed, it was really nice. It was a wonderful time and I wouldn’t mind doing that again. [laughs] I really enjoyed that.

I got my job at Mast House in about February last year, so it was only about a few months into the course. I started in September. Very tough and challenging school to begin with. Kids [pause] Kids only respect you if you’ve been there for a while. Talking years rather than days and months. So, that was very difficult to start with... I’ve
never been in an environment where, apart from a wedding, where I've been surrounded by – that's the wrong word – where I've been with so many Afro-Caribbean, er, Asian and er kids. Very much used to being in a white environment. So that was quite a challenge... like patois. [laughs] Erm I'm enjoying, it got easier, and I'm starting to enjoy it now. My parents are very pleased for me, happy for me. My sister graduated as a nurse this year so we've all sort of left education and gone back much later, except for my eldest brother.... My eldest brother was dyslexic, and that wasn't looked at until he was about 26, 27. So, really he's not got the confidence now to go back. I think he'd struggle anyway. But he's very good at doing practical things. Set him any practical task and he'll do it for you, so. He's just developed in a different way. And my youngest sister who's the only one who's sort followed a more traditional path. She
went to college and now she's gone to university and she's doing it part time.

Here I am now, basically. [laughs]  

Interviewer: Thanks for that. It's nice to kind of have that story in your own words. I'm really glad you were able to articulate it in the way that you did. I'm going to go back over some of the points that you picked up in recounting your life story and that you also picked up in the time line as well. First of all we'll start at the beginning. You were born in Bromsgrove and grew up in Redditch, and you lived in the centre of Redditch when you were growing up. What are your memories of growing up in Bromsgrove and Redditch? What's the abiding memories that you have of that?  

J: We lived in a terraced house. It was a very poor area. There were other families who were first generation immigrants, really, who lived along the street. But our next door neighbours were actually white, but he was
a single father with like four kids. Very poor area.
I remember there being big windows and a garage at the back of the house. [laughs]
But we had cousins and friends and stuff that all lived quite near to us. It was quite a happy time... I remember walking along the path and I cut my arm, it's a scar now. [laughs] Somehow I cut my arm on a nail and was actually hung from a nail and had to be rescued. We didn't have a bath! We had, erm... God, I sound like something from the thirties. [laughs] We had, erm... Perhaps we did have a bath. I remember my mum bathing me, because of all the blood... No, I think we must have had a bath...
[telephone rings, tape paused]
Interviewer: You talked a little bit there about humble beginnings, really. Would that be right? How do you identify with that part of your life? In other words, how do you feel that you've been affected by that part of
your life, those beginnings in terms of the person that you are now?

J: Mmmm. I think that... [pause] You never forget where you've come from, you never forget how the family struggled to survive. There was no benefits, as such, for my parents. If one of them was out of work, then it was an issue. They also was starting from scratch. We never lived in rented accommodation at all. We always lived in... owned the properties. So they always had a mortgage to pay. Had five kids, and it was the tradition to send money back to Jamaica as well... It was a very happy time. We never really... I suppose we never really asked for anything, we never really went without. We were very playful kids. We just made our own entertainment. It makes me appreciate what we've got now. I wouldn't consider any of us to be poor. We were poor then, but I wouldn't consider any of us to be poor now. I still consider myself working
I'm just trying to think, really. We just accepted, that's what you know, you don't know any different. Therefore, it's difficult to know how it's influenced you. It certainly didn't influence me in my choice of career or even where I decided to work. Although I see it influencing my choice in a few years' time, because I want to move back. I'd rather work in a middle school anyway, and I prefer the pace of life, really. It's nicer than living in the big city. Having moved out of Birmingham city centre and having to travel into town, it makes no difference...

I never really felt myself to be poor. Only on reflection. I can see that some people would have, and that would be a motivation to better themselves. But...

I've always had a sense of family. Lots of friends. I suppose you define yourself by the people you choose to hang around with.

Interviewer: Coming to Birmingham...
J: Hmm! Madness. [laughs] The grass is always greener... I was working in Bromsgrove, having a whale of a time, and then I started to come to pubs and clubs in Brum. And I thought, Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful to live here. So I killed myself, absolutely moved heaven and earth to get a job in Birmingham. And then my first day here I thought God, what have I done? [laughs] So I had to travel then from Redditch every day, and I don't know if you know the trains, but... If it was snowing you used to stop and you used to have to get off the train because it was too snowy for the track.

So I regretted that. But then as I was working in Brum I eventually decided to move. I moved in with a friend and I've been here ever since, really.

Interviewer: So how long have you been living in Birmingham?

J: Probably about seven years. Nearer
eight. Seven or eight years. It's got to be that.

Interviewer: So, there was something initially about the bright lights of Birmingham

[laughs]

Interviewer: That attracted you in? Today, how do you feel that Birmingham reflects the kind of person that you are?

J: I quite like the new things that are coming up in the city. The trendy places I do quite like... Erm, I do love Mailbox, Brindley Place and all that stuff. Erm, so yeah. I don't know how reflective that is of me. I suppose being out here is more reflective, outside the city centre. Simpler, really. Less cosmopolitan. More realistic, really, from my perspective. I suppose that's where a working class influence has come in. [pause] Perhaps. [laughs]

Interviewer: Can we talk about your father and mother and your relationship with them.

And thanks for sharing that in the time line, it
was very useful. Can you tell me more about the relationship you used to have with your father when you were younger.

J: I didn’t really see much of dad. He worked quite a lot.

[telephone rings, briefly]

When he came back in the evening he tended to go down the pub, so... I suppose if we were at the pub we would see quite a lot of him. [laughs] Saying that, though, we always had meals together. So, yes, we did see him every day. I didn’t remember that.

We always sat down together. The pot would go on in the morning for soup or whatever, but we would always sit down around six o’clock in the evening and eat together. That would be when dad got back from work.

It was all very close. It was amazingly close.

280 You literally walk next door... The pub would have been directly opposite the house, about 500 meters up the road. So...
He was very funny, very funny. Still is. Very funny man. Very sharp sense of humour...
Likes a laugh and a joke. He used to like to drink, he doesn't drink that much now...
He used to take us... We used to go fruit picking with him in the summer. He used to work at an aluminium factory, his job. The Christmas parties.. I remember him taking us there. Having to walk, because I've got a fear of walking up ladders or steps where you can see through. I remember we had to walk up a couple of times to get to the party.
He wasn't like the sort of dad that would take you to the park or take you shopping or whatever. Mum tended to do it. That's how we were.

Interviewer: You described him in the time line as strict. In what ways?
J: What he said went, it was as simple as that. [laughs] Very keen sense of what's right and wrong, what's moral and what's immoral. As I say, we all had to follow what
he said was right. A certain way that you had to present yourself. I remember him hitting us for not combing my hair... That bothered about detail. If you were going to school without your hair combed or without your tie done he would pick you up because you weren't presenting yourself properly or other members of the family.

Actually once, when I was about eight, I stole twenty pence from his wallet and bought a Wagon Wheel, and it made me sick because I felt so guilty about it. I've never eaten a Wagon Wheel since or stolen since either. [laughs] But we learned if you pestered him long enough he'd give you money anyway, so... [laughs] You just had to work for it a little bit.

Yeah. Very strict but very fair. I mean, I don't want to create the impression of somebody that was unreasonable to be strict. So... In fact, I still now present myself, I still try to present myself in a positive way. I didn't
wear jeans until I was in my mid-twenties. We weren't allowed jeans, we had to wear trousers and shoes, not trainers. And even when... those teenage years still carried through...  

Interviewer: How do you think your father's character impacted on you when you were growing up and the kind of person that you are today?  

I certainly wouldn't want to do anything that I think that any of my family would be ashamed of. Erm... I still take care about the way I, I appear most of the time. [laughs] [pause] I'm not sure. You mean in the sense of do I feel that part of me is a reflection of my father is.  

Interviewer: Some times it's difficult to put your finger on...  

J: I'm sure there is a lot of my dad in me. I'm positive about that, but I couldn't pull it out.  

Interviewer: How did your dad respond when you said you wanted to become a
teacher?

J: He was over the moon. He was over the moon when I became a civil servant. [laughs] He over the... He and my mum were just bursting with pride. And when I went to university, because I was the first one to go, they were just ecstatic, because they were desperate for me to stay in... Oh, God, yes, when I was sixteen I did a year in the sixth form and they were desperate for me to stay on. They were paying me money to stay in [laughs] erm school. They thought it was really important for me to stay, but I just wasn't ready at that time. So, when I got a job as a civil servant he was as pleased as punch, because it was respectable... So when I went to university they were ecstatic, and then I went into teacher training and teaching they were bursting with pride, telling everybody... Most people said why are you working in Mast House. [laughs]

Yeah, absolutely chuffed to bits.
Interviewer: What's your relationship like with your father today?

J: Erm... It's really good, I think. Erm...

We're able to sit and chat. Erm...

Interviewer: Does he still work?

J: Sort of. He's got a bit of arthritis now so he just works part time. We've got a good relationship. He's mellowed, I suppose, as we've become older he's not needed to be strict or anything like that. So in that sense he's mellowed. So, our conversations aren't to do with discipline and things like that. We just talk about general life, you know, how are you getting on. He's always offering advice. A bit of a know it all as well. He's quite a shy man, actually, quite shy. But then he comes out of himself, so... He's alright, alright.

Interviewer: And on the other side there is your mother. Tell me about the kind of relationship you had with your mother when you were younger.
J: Erm... She was really busy, but she took care of us more on, like, the day to day basis. I remember her taking me to childminder or school or whatever. Always very small, very slim, dainty. Erm... Hardworking. Again another keen sense of humour which is why they were probably attracted to each other. She is very religious, very religious. Only ever drunk once and that was one glass of Cherry B, and we got told that every day for the whole of our lives. I think she was trying to tell us the perils of alcohol, you know one glass would make her an expert. Still to this day she always... she tries something new and we liked it we got it every day until you couldn't eat it any more. [laughs] I remember she experimented with Bolognese. Every day for months is what we had was Bolognese, add a little pepper to it, or cheese. [laughs] Oh, dear. Yes... I smile when I think back to the time but they were
lovely.
I've always been able to talk to her. Always wanting us to do better, always pushing us, really. Not in an aggressive way. Always worried if we were outside or late coming back from school. She always worried about where we were and what we were doing.

I always remember her being home in the evening. I can't remember if she ever worked in the evenings, but she always did work. She was always home in the evenings, and hence she was worried if we were not back by eight o'clock. A ridiculous time to be back by. [laughs] Erm... A character, full of personality. Very talkative, probably which makes dad seem a bit shy. She's always the first to talk. She talks to strangers on buses and things like that. Erm... Always smiling, always happy. Always working hard.

Interviewer: In the time line you say that she always put her children and others before
herself. In what ways?

J: If we needed something, then the kids would get it first. Others I mean in respect of family and the church. Her priority was to be at morning ceremony and things like that on the Sunday... So, even if she had something else that she wanted to do she wouldn't do it because she would need to be at church on the Sunday or church on a weekday.

Interviewer: What denomination are we talking about?

J: Pentecostal

Interviewer: Right. How do you feel that your mother's character impacted on you when you were growing up or has impacted on the kind of person that you are today?

J: Looking back, I really had three women influences when I was growing up, as well as my mum. Because she was working, in my holidays I used to spend time with my Auntie Elsie and Auntie Sylvie. [pause] [very quietly...] So... I'm trying to think, really.

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[pause] I suppose she was very much a people person... [pause] I’m not sure.

Interviewer: How did your mother respond when you said you were going to become a teacher?

J: Oh, she was ecstatic. [laughs] She went around telling everybody, but I hadn’t actually got a place anywhere yet. [laughs] She was actually over the moon. I remember my graduations – people I didn’t know in Redditch she had told who would talk to me about it. So, she was as pleased as can be.

Interviewer: And, your relationship with your mother today?

J: Get along great. Probably see more of my mum than my dad for some reason. I think he is working part time, but I don’t... It really is quite dreadful not knowing for sure. But he works on the weekend, hence if I go over it will be on the weekend, I don’t go in the week, only at half term and stuff like that. I
see her at least two or three times a month... She's funny.

Interviewer: Why do you think your parents moved to Britain?

J: [laughs] I don't know. I think they just...

It's always a case of grass is always greener, isn't it? I know that my mum had a sister that had moved. Perhaps it's... Well it is desperately poor in Jamaica. There were six girls and their dad had died. [quietly...]

Mum had a baby so... perhaps that was a way of getting a better way of life. I suppose that was for most people that came over it wasn't a long term thing. I don't think when she came over she thought she would still be here nearly forty years later.

Interviewer: Do you have any contact or sense of affinity or identity with Jamaica?

J: [laughs] Much to my mum and dad's despair I don't at all. I absolutely do not feel... I mean, we've had family come over and stuff from Jamaica and that's been
absolutely excellent. I have absolutely no desire to go there. I have a fear of spiders, anyway. [laughs] And I was told a story about someone who went to a toilet and there was a spider there, so it's... It's just that... No, I don't really. I associate my sense of identity from my mum and dad and my family, uncle Beddy [quietly] That's what I knew, that's what I grew up with, I didn't grow up in Jamaica. Of course, I spoke about Jamaica and had Jamaican food... I don't know, actually, no, we had English food most of the time. [quietly...] Auntie Elsie, she cooked Jamaican food; we'd probably go there when we had proper Jamaican food.

Interviewer: In your time line you said that when your parents arrived in Britain they encountered some difficulties. Could you tell me more about that?

J: Did I?

Interviewer: Yes, you said [reads from time
"they faced additional difficulties by choosing to live in such a small place"

J: Oh, sorry. Erm... Well, when they moved Redditch probably only had about four or five thousand people living in it. Er, so there was a shortage of accommodation and things, so, you'd end up with like three or four families living in the one house in like a back street. [pause] There weren't many people full stop, but there certainly... Percentage wise, there was still less than like one percent black people there. But, erm... I think I meant from the perspective of having to share, not having something...

Like now, we've had like mum and dad's house to come forward from, but they've not had that sort of thing to come forward from. I know that could have led into, perhaps, racism or something like that, but... None of us have really been a victim of racism, so... I just meant them having a point from which to start, they had to create their own point
from which to start, basically. They shared a house, they shared a room with four families living there... They must have had kids actually. My eldest brother, my eldest sister and them two in one room. I remember my eldest sister set the room alight and that prompted them to buy their first house. [laughs] So, yeah, not the best of starts. But they must have been there quite a while to have had two kids. Yeah, so...

Interviewer: So looking back, how do you think they managed to cope in those circumstances?

J: I suppose they thought, well, come over here and start a new life you've got to try hard at that, and also they must have had money coming in. They always managed to send some money back...

Interviewer: Would I be wrong in saying that hard work was important in terms of coping with those circumstances?

J: They would only have had, erm, very
much menial jobs to begin with. They were skilled in... [quietly] they grew up on farms. They would have been skilled in a manual sort of way. Erm... I think they worked together. Yeah, they both worked at the spring factory which is what Redditch was famous for springs and needles, and they both worked at that...

[telephone rings. tape paused]

Interviewer: You've just been talking about the way they responded in those circumstances. Erm, and you were talking about the nature of the jobs that they were doing at that time.

J: As they became more settled they left the BHLN spring factory. Mum went to work at Mattessons, they make processed meats, and dad worked at the aluminium factory which was a lot more money. He'd have been there about fifteen, twenty years, and mum the same, really. Then he got made redundant. Then he went back to work on a
farm... [laughs] And he progressed there, became a team leader and supervisor there. I can't think what mum did... I remember her leaving Mattessons, loads of people did actually, when she was made redundant. I don't know what she did afterwards. I suppose it would have been working in one of the small factories or something like that in Redditch. Erm... And now... waiting for their retirement.

Interviewer: Tell me about the relationship you have with your brothers and sisters.

J: I'm very close to my younger sister. I see her about once a week and we talk on the 'phone. Er... My eldest... next eldest is my brother – he lives in London so, I don't really see him that often, maybe only a couple of times a year, but in between we probably speak on the 'phone about four times a year. So, not really exactly close, but we still keep in touch and keep up with things that are going on. So... recently I've seen more
of him and there are plans to see more of him in the summer, so that may be about to change. My eldest sister, quite close, we chat on the 'phone and stuff like that. Erm... she's a nurse. She started work about the same time I started work as a teacher. We've not really seen that much of each other because she works nights and weekends and stuff like that. She's got two kids. [pause] Erm... And then there's David who I wasn't very close to at all, and then I moved here and then for some reason we just seemed to get on like a house on fire since I moved. So, I probably see him a couple of times a week as well now. So... But he got married in September, so I don't know if that brought together that kind of sense of family and things because we're all together and seeing each other and stuff. Hence... yeah... hence that's probably why I see more of him because of the wedding, etcetera etcetera.
Interviewer: What kind of response did you get from your brothers and sisters to your decision to become a teacher?

J: Erm... They were a little bit surprised. Erm... But happy for me, supportive of my decision... Very happy for me, yeah, very interested.

Interviewer: You initially used the word surprised...

J: Erm... Only surprised by as much as I was doing a business degree and specialising in human resources and the assumption was that I would go into HR. Although it would have been my idea at the start of the course to go into HR, because I didn't really consider teaching as viable until I started the second year of my degree and was part way through. So... Only surprised in that sense.

Interviewer: Do you talk to your brothers and sisters about the job you are doing now?

J: I'm always asked how I'm getting on and...
for any horror stories. [laughs] The horror stories are always more interesting... [laughs]

Interviewer: You've mentioned some aunts and uncles and they played a significant role in your upbringing. You may want to say a little more about them. I was also asking in the timeline about your grandparents. Can you tell me a little bit more about your grandparents?

J: Not really. I've never met my grandparents on my dad's side because they died quite a while ago. I guess around the time that I was born. I certainly don't have any recollection of them being referred to as alive in that sense, only in the past tense. My mum's dad was quite a lot older than my grandma and he probably died as well before I was born, 'cause I certainly never met him. Erm.. And then nan, on my mum's side, I've met her a few times, [quietly] seven times. She's very much like...
my mother. Instantly see my mother in her. They’re about the same height. Both talk. Both interested in people. Er... I do have memories of her... making us laugh... But then she’d only be here for about four weeks and then go back to Jamaica. So... That was my grandma really.

Interviewer: What about aunts and uncles?

J: Erm... They were there a lot of the time when I was growing up. We didn’t... Erm... It was very much the idea or the concept, with reflection, because you obviously aren’t conscious of it at the time, of an extended family. So... When mum and dad were at work then we were looked after by Auntie Elsie or Auntie Ena. And, if Auntie Ena was at work then mum and dad would be looking after us and her kids too, sort of thing. Erm... Auntie Elsie’s children were a lot older than us. She used to be good fun to be with. We never stayed at her... we were always out, so we would walk ‘round to Auntie Elsie’s,
which was a good hour's walk [laughs] and we would walk 'round and spend some time with her. Always welcoming. Uncle Beddy had the hugest garden, it used to go on for ever. It was so big he cut it back and had an allotment, so we would spend time there. He was extremely good – perhaps that's one of the influences on why I wanted to become a teacher – he was extremely good at explaining things. Explaining things like pollination of plants. He was the sort of person that engaged you as well...

[tape ends]

[Auntie Sylvie] Absolutely wicked. [laughs]

There's not a thing in this world that you can't laugh about, which is good in many respects. Always laughing. I used to dread her sometimes [laughs] Not because she was nasty in any way, but her humour was so sharp that you couldn't... you couldn't get away with anything without her picking up on it and saying something about it. See, if
anything like your hands were dirty she would have a comment to make about it. [laughs] She was a... well, she is a great woman. She used to always take us down the back of her garden – it was another long garden and it backed on to the high school that I eventually went to, and she talked about what was going to happen when I looked at the trees in her garden. She made lots of tea. A very nice woman.

Interviewer: You say in your time line that your parents wanted you and your brothers and sisters to stay on at school. Why do you think that was the case?

J: Just so that we could progress on. They saw college, school, university as a way of bettering oneself. [pause] Not bettering yourself in a... Not in a sense of... I don't know if bettering... In a way of giving yourself opportunities to achieve more, rather than bettering yourself. They wouldn't see themselves as any better or any worse
than somebody else. So, just a way of opening doors and giving more opportunities and... And also I think that they realised that there is no need to go straight into work, to have some fun. Erm... I don't think they wanted us to go into, like... They probably would have viewed their lives as quite mundane. They wouldn't have wanted us to have gone into that and to have settled into that. So, that's probably why they were so pleased when I got a job as a civil servant rather than a job working in a factory.

Interviewer: Thinking about that, then, you said earlier in the interview that you felt at one point that you weren't ready to engage in the work that you needed to do to become a teacher and which may have been linked to staying on at school and progressing in the more traditional way to university, etc.. Why do you think that you and your brothers and sisters took a more non-traditional approach or route? Forgive me if I'm using
words which are not reflective of your experience, but do you know what I'm getting at? You leave at sixteen, try something out, come back to education. Why do you think there was a tendency to follow that route?

J: I don't... Well, I would have thought it would have been... [pause] I don't know, actually. The obvious answer is that there was no money in the family and that... But when I was sixteen there was money. Erm... My brothers and sisters were working. I just think... I don't know actually, I just think I wanted to earn my own money. Erm... My mum and dad didn't want me to. [laughs] They had quite a nice house when I was sixteen, but erm... I just wasn't... I wasn't engaged, I don't think. There were other things I wanted to do. I didn't want to go into education, I wanted to have fun. Mmm... Now I've thought it I can't even decide whether I think it's so or not. [laughs] Erm...
I've always thought it was because I wanted to have my own money, actually.

Interviewer: A sense of independence?

J: Mmm. But I'm just trying to think why. Dad wasn't really that strict anymore. Mum was never strict. [laughs] [pause] It just didn't engage me. I knew if I worked then I knew I would get money and I could buy things that I wanted and do things that I wanted without having to ask them. I just think it was a case of wanting more money than they gave me.

Interviewer: Do you think that your own school experiences or the school experiences of your brothers and sisters had any impact on your desire to teach?

J: In some respects it must have because for the longest time I did want to become a teacher. So, there must have been something that I saw. [pause] I had some inspirational teachers when I was growing up. Erm... Teachers who engaged me, took time to talk to me. So... I can't pinpoint it to
any one thing or any one person really. I was lucky in the fact that there were so many good teachers around to help me at school.

Interviewer: Friends. You talk about many friends in your time line. One of those friends is a friend from when you first started at school.

J: Yes, Russell.

Interviewer: So, it's a lifetime friend. What about your other friends? How long have you known them?

J: [looks at timeline] Dave I've known about ten years. Tony, probably about eight years. Matt, ten years, and Jude about eighteen months. Jude was on the teacher training course with me. Erm...

Interviewer: Is Jude teaching now?

J: Yes, she's teaching down the road. Erm...

Dave has just become redundant. Met him in a pub. We had a conversation and became friends ever since, so... Erm.. We're
quite close friends, we get on really well. Same sense of humour. I think we have the same morals as well If I say something, it's almost... It goes without saying that there'll be approval or disapproval. We both have a love of tacky pop music as well, which I'm sure [laughs] helps. [laughs]

Interviewer: Such as?

J: We both like Kylie Minogue [laughs] We both like having a laugh. We talk about anything. Erm, Tony, I met through other friends that I went to school with... I only went to school with them for a couple of years, but they were friends anyway, and I met Tony through them and we sort of gelled and became good friends. Again he's got a very.. he's got a dreadful sense of humour. He tries to make jokes but they're not very funny at all. But I tend to find that... I still find it quite amazing that somebody who's not bothered about things like that. So, we're friends. Matt... [pause] I was out in
erm... We were out in a pub and again it's a case of striking up a conversation. Matt went out with another friend called Andy and I got them both mixed up, so... I remember saying that I'd send him a postcard. We were absolutely drunk. I was about twenty...

I was probably about nineteen, actually... I got the names mixed up, so I sent it to the wrong person and things like that. But we've always been friends since and he actually lives just around the corner now. Part of the reason why I moved down to Erdington. It's nice to have somebody you know about, really. He's Welsh. [laughs] Erm, Russell is a guy I've known since I was about three.

We went to school together apart from a short time I was at Bircensale Middle. Even when he was at university we were still friends, I used to go and see him and he used to come down and see me. [quietly] I suppose life takes you different places, doesn't it?
Interviewer: How important are your friends to you?

J: I think that you sort of get your own grounding from your family and friends around you. They make you more interesting.

Interviewer: You've got friendships that are quite secure and stable. Most of your friendship network has been a long-standing friendship network. How did they respond when you said that you wanted to become a teacher?

J: Erm... [laughs] They probably were shocked. [laughs] Shocked because I'd always talked about HR. Erm... Very supportive, actually, whilst I was at university. [quietly Erm... They would pay to go out and stuff like that. Erm... They wouldn't put any pressure on to go out. Erm... They always took an interest in what I was doing... They were very good, they were great. Again, as pleased as punch that
I went to university. Over the moon when I got... when I graduated, because Matt and Dave came to my graduation and we went out for a meal and they paid for the meal which was really nice of them. Erm... They were so proud of me at the graduation. Bought me the video of it and stuff like that so it was great. Tony wanted a picture of it, so he's got a picture of it...

Interviewer: Are there any other friends that are important to you?

J: There's Andrew and Morton... because Morton is the reason that I know Tony and I know Andrew. Still... We still are friends and we're still, we're still in touch, but he moved to London and that sort of does put a strain on your friendship and you don't get to see each other as much. But saying that, he's just moved back and we're in touch more now, so that's about to change. And Andrew has just moved back to Birmingham so I probably see him about once or twice a
week now. So... Erm... Being back with Andrew we just switched straight back to being twenty again. [laughs] You can imagine lots of quantities of alcohol and staggering along the street. [laughs]

Interviewer: Do you talk regularly to your friends about your job?

J: Yes, I do... We just talk in general. Have a laugh about it, so... What's happened at school. We just talk about life, what's happening in our lives... So, yeah... They ask... But quite often knowing them for so long you just talk about things in general.

Interviewer: Do you think your friends have affected the kind of person that you are today?

J: [laughs] Probably. I'd probably be more sane, I think. [laughs] Well, they must have...

Interviewer: The people you describe as friends are not necessarily the people you work with. What do you feel about that?
J: I do have friends at work but they are new friends to me. I certainly wouldn’t... The question on the timeline asks about best or closest friends. I’ve got some good friends at work... erm... Joyce... Heather... Chris...[pause] I speak to everybody but I would certainly never class them as best or closest friends... But then I do have some really good friends from my last job at the Benefits Agency where I spent a lot of time, so... Which makes Jude a bit of an anomaly really, doesn’t it? But then we shared the experience of being on the teacher training together and provided a support to each other. We were constantly sharing and still are our resources and our ideas and have quickly built up a good and strong friendship, whereas at work, you do socially interact but you don’t really share things, you don’t have to talk about things. With Jude, we talk about things that we’re doing and we talk about things all the time... and
the friendship builds off that. So...

**Interviewer:** Let’s talk a little bit about your education. You mentioned in your timeline the various schools that you attended. Can you tell me how you felt about school when you were younger?

**J:** After the first day when I was embarrassed, it took me a while to settle in. Erm... I almost didn't have any feelings about school, really. I hated anything where I had to stand in front of a group. Erm... I enjoyed playtime, lunchtime, socialising with the other children. [laughs] I remember, I had a friend called Robert and the register was alphabetical, and I could never understand why his name was called before mine in the register, because, obviously, it was alphabetical by surname, and that took me a while to understand. [laughs] But, I remember skipping, hopscotch in the playground. There was a big bank in the playground and I remember playing on the
bank. I remember being in the classroom and each year being moved up to the next classroom. That teacher that I didn't like actually followed us... No she came back in the last year... I'm trying to think how I ended up at two primary schools. [pause] She actually followed us into the last year at primary school, but I couldn't get on with her. [pause] And that, that probably was when we happened to move, and so I'd have gone... I've got that in the wrong order actually, I'd have gone St Stephens Primary to... The first school was St Stephens Primary, then I went to Birchfield Primary, then I went to Bircensale Middle which was the follow up school from Birchfield. Then I went back to St Stephens Middle School, and then I progressed up to Abbey High School. Erm... [quietly] Oh, it's not called Birchfield any more, it's called Hollyoaks. Birchfield was a special... special school next door. [laughs] I always remember they
were kept separate. I always wondered why.

It was special as in lots of people from abroad who English was... wasn't even a second language for them. Sort of giving them enough English so that they could come into school. I don't know why I said I went there... I had a wonderful time at the primary school. Sitting down for assembly. Even queuing to go into a room, I remember. We had a fete there. We had a big concrete playground instead of grass, I remember... Erm.. Then we were moved up to middle. It was just up the road, it was very close. My best friend was called Miles, we used to go to school together. I remember there being a massive bank at the top of the playground. And in the first term of being there the zoo man came round, and we were all sat in the hall, and I was right in the middle, and he brought out this python [laughs] and it was so long. I don't remember being so scared in my whole life.
He slowly carried it around everybody, so it was like waiting to be executed. By the time it got round to me... I didn’t run off, actually, I was quite brave. I wouldn’t touch it though. If I’d have been on the edge or anywhere where it would have been easy to have run away, I would’ve run away like mad. I remember a girl wearing contact lenses in the first year of Middle School, because we were all totally amazed by the fact that she had contact lenses.

Interviewer: How do you think those school experiences have affected you today?

J: [pause] In the sense of becoming a teacher?

Interviewer: Both in life and in becoming a teacher?

J: I think there were lots of happy times I associate with being at school, but I was unhappy at Bircensale, hence I left. So I think that... Sometimes I pick up on things at school and actively seek and try to help
people that are not enjoying school. So perhaps I can sort of... I don't know... understand reasonably well or a little bit why they might not enjoy school... Perhaps I wanted to... to make a difference. [laughs] I think teachers do make a difference. A good teacher and a bad teacher can make all the difference in the world.

Interviewer: You spoke about a couple of favourite teachers in your timeline – Miss Jones and Mr Zablocki. Can you tell me about those teachers and what you felt were their special qualities?

J: Miss Jones always had time. She was an NQT actually. She always had time for us. She was much closer to our age as well. We would have been sixteen and she was an NQT and I wouldn't be surprised if she was about twenty-two. All the other teachers were in their thirties, so there was a... quite a shocking... not a shocking, but there was quite a... The other ones I felt were from
quite a different generation. But we would just sit and chat and talk to her and she was great at really relating... She was always smiling and just an all round nice person. [pause] [laughs] She actually ran off with somebody in our year which perhaps wasn't so great, but made a good story. [laughs] Erm... Mr Zablocki was our history teacher. He was just a very nice, a very friendly, a very interesting person. I suppose both of them talked to us and we were able to talk to them about things, and not just the subject. We would talk about things going on in life and stuff, so... that probably made them seem more human. I notice kids, generally, would talk come and talk to them about all sorts of things.

Interviewer: Is that something that has impacted on your own teaching style?

J: Erm... Yeah, I think, I'm very approachable. The kids certainly think that they can have a laugh, which is good,
although last term I did think that I got a little bit too informal, not in an inappropriate way... In the fact that I wasn't happy about where the boundaries were to how they would react and the time it took them to do what I wanted them to do. So, I've pulled back on that a little bit, but I still try to have a laugh and... Use a little bit of sarcasm, but not too much. [laughs]

Interviewer: Those teachers that had those special qualities and attributes. Do you think that they affected you personally?

J: I think that I got some of my confidence back academically through having them as teachers. They always had time for you in the class. They would explain and re-explain if you didn't understand. Erm... Miss Jones was really good at helping you work through, she was an English teacher, grammatical errors and spelling errors, and she was really good at working through with you so that you came up with the results.
Very positive.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about the teacher who embarrassed you on your first day?

J: She's a bitch. [laughs] She obviously didn't enjoy teaching. I think she was just coasting to retirement. She probably viewed herself as strict. It was quite unnecessary, but because she'd been there so long nobody would have probably said anything to her. She'd probably been at the school twenty or thirty years. She'd been there when my brothers and sisters had gone through. I don't know if she'd had a bad experience, but she was very cruel. She didn't have any time for anybody. So, I didn't really progress much academically at that school.

Interviewer: How do you think that she and that critical incident and event impacted on you personally?

J: I would never... erm... in my teaching put
a pupil in that position where they were embarrassed. I always praise effort as well as achievement... I would always praise for having a try. So... I use positive approaches. She was always quite negative.

Interviewer: Do you think that those events with that reception teacher had any bearing on your decision to become a teacher?

J: No. I think the textbook answer was that I decided to become a teacher because... [laughs] I suppose in the sense that I would never put anybody in that position... She'll always be a memory for me, an unfortunate memory...

Interviewer: You mentioned Mr Zablocki, did you have any other male teachers both at primary and at secondary school?

J: The headmaster at St Stephens was a man. I was never taught... at primary. At middle, I remember we had a music teacher... Oh, Mr Godfrey, there was Mr Palfrey and Mr Godfrey. Erm... I liked them,
they were very good. [pause] It’s unusual
that... I would have thought that I would
have preferred a secondary environment but
I actually prefer a middle school
environment, and I’m just wondering if that’s
because I had such a relaxed time at middle
school.

1180 Interviewer: Just to clarify, My Palfrey and
Mr Godfrey, they were at the middle school?
J: Yes, they were at St Stephens Middle,
so... I can’t remember any other men... Oh,
my PE teacher... I sort of spent a lot of time
with him because I was very sporty. I was
always going to athletics championships on
Saturdays and stuff.
Interviewer: Were those male teachers of
varying ages?

1190 J: Erm... Mr Price who was the PE teacher,
he would have been about twenty-six. The
others would have been older.
Interviewer: Did you have any teachers from
minority ethnic groups?
J: No. [laughs] No. None at all. There were hardly... I mean... there were hardly any black or Asian children in school so...

Interviewer: You mentioned college in your timeline and you enjoyed being at university. You mention also Worcestershire Academy...

J: That was vocational. It was part of... at the Jobcentre they were keen for people to do NVQs, so, I thought, why not.

Interviewer: So, do you think your college and university experience has made an impact on the kind of person you are today?

J: Erm... It's made me more academic in many respects. Er... I think about things a lot more than I did prior. I very much kept myself on a need to know basis. [laughs] I would rarely think about things in great detail. I suppose that now, especially now that I'm in education, you are thinking about the impact of what you say... the influence and the difference... It's just like the advert.
[laughs] But I have quite a lot of special needs, anyway, so, you have to think of...
You constantly have to change your strategies because otherwise...

Interviewer: Your experiences at university had an impact on your decision to become a teacher. How important do you think the university context was to you in making that decision; do you think you would have made that decision had you not been at university? Would you have made the decision to go to university in order to train to become a teacher?

J: No. It's interesting you saying that because I remember someone from the Teacher Training Agency coming into the university...

Interviewer: In your timeline you say in block capitals that you always wanted to become a teacher. Why do you feel you always wanted to be?

J: That's an unusual question... Why do I
feel I always wanted to be?

Interviewer: It's an interesting statement.

J: I always wanted to... I don't know. [pause]
It's something I always wanted to do but never had the confidence to do it. I suppose it would have been a case of... just seeing myself doing it.... Colour was never an issue. So, it's quite bizarre for me in this context, really, seeing myself as a black or Afro-Caribbean teacher, I just... Colour was never an issue... I remember one racial taunt about somebody else, and then they turned around and looked at me and said it's alright we don't mean you, but... erm...

Interviewer: Did you ever feel any sort of disappointment at not being able to pursue your career aspiration initially?

J: Not at all. I wasn't ready to go to university until I went. If I'd have gone before I would have just dropped out, there are no two ways about it. My life at that time was about going out and having fun with
friends. Working for the Job Centre gave me that flexibility because we had quite a lot of annual leave and we also had a lot of flex leave, so you could juggle your annual leave so... you know, it just fitted in with what I wanted to do with my life at that time. I certainly wouldn't have enjoyed university at that time... I certainly wouldn't have had the life experience to handle it and to put things into perspective. So...

Interviewer: Who do you think is the most important influence in your life?

J: [pause] I'm the most important influence in my life. My life is about me and my life is about decisions about me.

Interviewer: Is there anything further that you would want to say about your life that you haven't had the chance to say, notwithstanding your career in teaching which we'll talk about next time?

J: Erm... Not really... Just... Funny that you brought up that... You seemed quite

| 1270 | friends. Working for the Job Centre gave me that flexibility because we had quite a lot of annual leave and we also had a lot of flex leave, so you could juggle your annual leave so... you know, it just fitted in with what I wanted to do with my life at that time. I certainly wouldn't have enjoyed university at that time... I certainly wouldn't have had the life experience to handle it and to put things into perspective. So... |
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interested in the fact that I didn't... want to
be a... well, I always wanted to be a teacher
but I wouldn't have gone for it at that time
because it just wasn't me. I mean, it all just
sort of fitted into place, because when I went
to university I had such a determination to...
First of all I wanted to prove to them that... I
could do the HND, and so... I was failing
initially, but after about six weeks I just sort
of picked it all up and I got a distinction,
hence I was able to go straight onto the
second year of a degree. But I was also
working twenty weeks a year full time for the
Benefits Agency and twenty-two hours a
week for HFC Bank because I had the
mortgage and that stuff to pay. So, it wasn't
that it wasn't a traditional time at university
but... So, there was a lot of determination... I
still had to work. [laughs]

Part 2
Interviewer: Today, I want to talk about your
life in teaching, what made you become a
teacher, how you feel about teaching today, the nature of the school that you’re working in and how you feel about that.

J: OK

Interviewer: I’m going to start off with a fairly open ended question and that really is to invite you to tell me the story of your life as a teacher.

J: In respect of becoming one, or...? IJ

Interviewer: The whole story as you see it. Whatever you see as most appropriate to that story.

J: OK. Erm... Extremely open ended. A B C H I J

Erm... Well, let’s see. Well, when I was younger I wanted to become a teacher but... but circumstances dictated that wasn’t to happen when I was younger. I was quite glad in many ways because I wouldn’t have wanted the responsibility of being tied to set... to set leave and all that stuff. So, erm... Part way through my university course the TTA came to the university. And I
missed that, actually, but I telephoned them and liked what they said. Er... Training and development opportunities, erm... progression... erm... and at that time I had the confidence to go into teaching. Erm, so... Yeah, I had loads of information through from them. I saw a careers advisor at the university and well filled in... [pause] There were so many forms to fill in actually, I can't remember which of the forms it was I filled in. I think it was an application form directly to Thomas Telford or to a SCITT... and it just sort of happened from there really. I didn't get the SCITT, which I was glad of... 'cos, still although you've got all the information it takes quite a long time to process because the options are so varied and yet... some of them cross over in many way, but it definitely wasn't the sort of training for me. And... I didn't get turned down by Thomas Telford, but they wanted me to get some more experience. While I
was getting the... additional experience...
just... with no actual confidence of ever
getting in there I applied to Warwick and...
they sort of like offered me an interview and
I was so shocked that... I must have read
three books on being a secondary school
teacher and, er... I actually practically did a
GCSE book and an A level book in ICT,
because I just couldn't believe I'd had the
interview for Warwick, because it was just
beyond belief, really. So, erm... I got there.
The interview went extremely well,
extremely well, and I got offered a place,
so... I couldn't really ask for more. I
thoroughly enjoyed being at Warwick. A
great university.

Er... went... The first placement was at Kane
Masters High Days which is a mixed
grammar school and that was great. The
kids were absolutely wonderful. The staff
were wonderful, very supportive, willing to
share all their resources and explain it,
because it's at a very high level; even in Year 7, you're still operating at an extremely high level. Erm... I wasn't used to a lot of the IT there, I used to glaze about the IT and they all took time out to explain how to use it and stuff, and that was great.

Erm... went back to university for a while. And my second placement was at Shuttlecock Hall [comprehensive], which is totally different. [smiling] White trash school. But erm... Staff were absolutely excellent there, but didn't really... Classes were too big. I think teaching is all about forming relationships. Some of the classes were like thirty-four, in a small room with like two to a computer. And it's just no way to form any kind of relationship there. So, er... I didn't really like it. I was sort of... sort of thing, I was part way through I thought well I may as well stick it out. I might as well get the certificate at the end of it. If nothing else I can always go back to it later.
And I got... Actually before I started my second placement I had my interview with Mast House. I got that job there. Then I started my second placement. [slight pause] Didn't really like it. Had a few doubts. But then I was so happy when I graduated, so relieved... erm... that... you know, I sort of carried on with Mast House.

And, so yeah, I started Mast House September, er, teaching mainly IT and part business. But they took two NQTs on for the one... as well that and a little bit jobs and they took us both on. So, erm, we've had a relatively light timetable which has given us an excellent opportunity to like settle into school and observe what's going on. Just like any big organisation, there's lots of different... etiquettes and things going on.

So, that's given us a great opportunity to do that. And also there's a lot of work to do in the NQT year, just preparing resources. And I went there with a hell of... loads of
resources, anyway, cos I always made my own. So, I've also got to look through what I've got and stuff, so I'm grateful for the time. Erm. Extremely well supported. Because of the problems... I think it's the most inner city school in Birmingham and one of the most... highest number of... what is it? Certainly for free school meals, it puts it in one of the top brackets for that. And people... kids come in to school from... challenging backgrounds, I suppose, being polite, with nothing constant in their lives. So school is the only constant. So, actually, as we've been there term by term that's got a lot better. People drift in and out of their lives, so that's got better. Although, they're all ready for a holiday now... they've seen the sun and everything, so that's a big change in their behaviour. Erm... I quite enjoy it. [pause] I think because you are so well supported it's hard not to enjoy it because there's always somebody to turn to if you're unsure. Erm... I feel very valued
there by a lot of the kids. Er... I had a card from one that just said thank you for being a great teacher. So, even though he drives me mad. He's got no confidence in what he does, so... Involves a lot of one to one. And even with the... well, the class started out at twenty-two and we've got about twenty-seven now... but even with the relatively small class, still it's hard to have one to one.

I think that classes should be about twenty, really, so you've got time. Erm... But, yeah, I enjoy it. I like the kids. I'm looking forward to the end of term, though. [laughs] In a positive way, of course. I think you need to refresh as well yourself. Cos, like... we had... just these seven... We had a longer term before and everybody was absolutely drained by the end of it. And... you're just not... you're not productive, I don't think, as a teacher, and the kids are... had enough, they need a break to, to let things settle in. [pause] So, but... I like it. Does that answer
your open ended question? [laughs]

Interviewer: Yes. That's very good, actually. Erm... It's given me a sense of... It picks up a number of things you touched on last time when we were just talking about yourself. Erm... You decided to become a teacher around 1984, which is when you kind of initially wanted to become a teacher. At the last interview, you talked a little bit about what might have prompted that thought in your own mind. Do you want to say a little bit more about what you think the reasons may have been to you wanting to become a teacher?

J: I can't remember what I said before, but... I'd imagine that I would have observed something or seen something... I had a lot of respect for a lot of my teachers. So... I got on well with them. And it... You can see that you're... using teacher's speak, but that you're adding value, and that must be a great feeling to... to know that, you know?...
You've helped a kid do as well as they can do. So... I think they... it was... I don't know. It was the relationships and being relaxed with them. [pause] [quietly] Although, I never felt particularly academically bright, so... [pause] But I can't... Trying to think. I know there were teachers that I admired but... I can't put my finger on anything in particular.

Interviewer: So was it a combination of factors...

J: Mmm

Interviewer: Your own experience as a young person, growing up, and your own experience of education... correct me if I'm wrong...

J: Yeah

Interviewer: of being exposed to good teachers... erm...

J: I think I must have seen them as being happy and... really, when you're twelve, you're not really exposed to that many professions really. I mean, teachers
are what you're exposed to most of the time. But, we had some really good teachers. 'Cos, things like holiday and pay really wouldn't of even have come into it because at twelve, it doesn't really, does it? So... I think it must have been a profession that I respected.... and saw some value in.

Interviewer: And, that still applies, does it?

J: Oh, definitely, although it's a lot tougher than I thought. [laughs]

Interviewer: Do you regard teaching as worthwhile?

J: My teaching or teaching in general?

[laughs]

Interviewer: I don't know... Your teaching? Teaching in general? Maybe both?

J: However I answer it's gonna be my teaching. Yes, I think it's excellent. No I think teaching is... is one of those professions, probably mainly like civil service professions, where you are... you are giving something back, and I think at the
same time you are sort of... I think you have a sense of... duty, of some kind. A sense of duty. Erm... I'm just trying to elaborate that. [pause] Or perhaps a lot of your... your motivation comes... comes from the thought of... of giving something back. Of helping erm... yeah, teachers can make a difference in a child's life, really, can't they? We always remember... that's an advert, isn't it? You always remember your good teachers, but it's true, isn't it. You always do remember... just as you always do remember your bad teachers as well, and all of the bad times at school. But I think teaching... well, society wouldn't really exist, would it, without teachers, would it? So... at a very fundamental lesson... level, sorry, teachers are vital. But I think that from what I've seen, the vast majority of teachers are constantly trying to ensure that they are giving the best to their pupils. They are serving their... serving their pupils who are customers in
many respects, serving their customers' needs as best they can within the resources that are available. So... I think that teaching is very worthwhile.

Interviewer: You also said in your timeline that “I first decided to become a teacher in 1984” and then you said that “I thought there were not enough black teachers”. And then you say you think it’s an “exciting and worthwhile career”. But, that middle bit - “I thought there were not enough black teachers” - why was that important to you and did you think you would contribute to making a difference in that particular way?

J: In 1984 I wouldn’t have thought that...

Interviewer: No, I'm not saying that you thought it in 1984 but that's how you rationalised wanting to teach.

J: When I first thought about it in 1984 I wouldn’t have seen any black teachers. I would have only had white teachers. So, I would have lacked any kind of role model.
Now, whether that influenced my decision not to pursue teaching earlier, I don't think it did, but it's one of those things that you'll just never know, cos, you know, sliding doors and whatever. But... certainly was a lack of a role model. Erm... [pause] I can't even remember... I suppose I must have before I left [laughs] school, but, God, I can't remember. I don't think we had any black teachers. I don't know if that's... I suppose working in, like, Mast House now with like so many black teachers there it's hard to imagine being in a school, but I don't think we did. There weren't particularly many black kids really. So... At that time. It's totally different now. But no. I ... I don't know. It's not something I've really thought about. You make choices, don't you, and take the path that you choose. I still think, anyway, I wouldn't have actually gone into it any earlier. I was too busy doing other things. So, yeah, for myself I chose the right time to
Interviewer: Can you tell me about the school you're working in presently, Mast House?

J: I think it's a great place. There's always lots going on, there's lots of talent both within the pupils and within the teachers. Erm... We do have our challenging circumstance, as I said before. The kids are coming in with so much going on, so much baggage, that... that can be a problem. Then it's amazing to see how hard some of them try and... not just the more able, so to speak, but across the board. But as with life, it is a case where it's a few are spoiling it for the many. So, that's what you have to stamp out, really. [pause]

Interviewer: Do you think the school pupil composition has had an impact on how you teach?

J: [pause] Erm... Yes, it... well it must do because for an awful lot of them English is a
second language. Very, very aware of words and careful that, if I describe them, to make sure that I describe them using words that they all know rather than using word that they potentially wouldn't know. So, stripping it down to the very basics. Words like 'monopoly' they don't have a clue or... 'Horizontal' [laughs] So, just everyday words and... they're not exposed to them at home because their parents... they probably don't even speak in English at home, so... And it's not... you know, it's language that you would hear normally, I think, brought up in like an English speaking family but... not... not for them, so... So, it does... it does... erm... [pause] like... I don't think they like wordy things, either. I don't think most kids do. At Kane Masters it was different and you could do that there. Here you can't. They actively seek praise which I was surprised about. Erm... They value their work. Erm... I'll point out the good things and the bad things so...
But then it's hard to say how it's impacted 'cause it's what I've gone into first of all, isn't it? So... But I think it has, 'cause just culturally different I think you use case studies and stuff to try and make it relevant to them Or you pick something... 'cause I've done over the last week which may come up in their exam next year, and get them used to things like... we were talking about erm... making paper and trees being felled and none of them knew what the word 'felled' meant. [pause]

Interviewer: So, it's about making your teaching strategies relevant and appropriate to them, recognising the background and circumstances that those children have come from?

J: Yeah. Or having to shift them into where they need to be... Or like today, saying to someone what a lumberjack does or what a travel agent does so that they're in a place ready for the exam. So... Sometimes
you take it to where they are but other times
you have to take them to where... where it
should be and use the language but then
break it down for them once you've used the
key words.

Interviewer: Do you think the challenging
circumstances have affected your
commitment or motivation as a teacher?

J: I think you can become very demotivated
when you're faced with a lot of... it sort of... it
always seems to spiral. You'll have one bad
lesson which will impact on the next which
will impact on the next. But you always sort
of know that it's going to stop and then you'll
go back to having good lessons. And if there
is a problem, the support system is so
excellent there. I always calling upon it.

[laughs] So... Erm... You don't really get
stressed out but you... you're able to contain
it rather than make it something that you're
drag in with you every day. I think that's the
difference between this school and a lot of
schools, is that the pastoral team will step in if there is a problem. So they sort of deal with that stress for you, so you can get on with... and focus on the teaching and not deal with... The pastoral team is there to deal with pupil behaviour not... not the teachers.

Interviewer: So, they are dealing with pupil behaviour and in a sense they are offering support to you by doing that?


Interviewer: Is there any other strategy you use to get that support. Do you offload to family and friends. What other strategies do you use when you've had a really bad day and to cope with this.

J: I always think about what I could have done differently if I've had a bad day, and then that gives you something to work with next time. Erm... I've got, er, some friends from teacher training that probably understand more than family and friends.
But... I’ve never really been that stressed out. I suppose at the start it was quite stressful ‘cause you’re suddenly meeting, what was it, four hundred new kids, and that... you know all need teachers and are not sure of the systems and stuff. But that’s only to be expected, really. Erm... And at that time, there were three of us who had graduated from Warwick and at school where there’s four NQTs, so... We all really had each other, anyway. Erm... I get on really well with the heads of department, so... And they... they sort of support you anyway, right from the start, so... It’s sort of seamless. It’s not something that suddenly happens, it’s always there. They come in to your lessons and ask how things are going and things like that. So... I’ve not really needed to... The vast majority of the time it’s fine, I’ve really enjoyed it, so...

Interviewer: Is there more that you want to say about why you enjoy the job?
J: Erm... I... I like the staff that work at the school and how the school operates. I like its friendliness and it's a team. [pause] I like the difference... it's a difference culturally and ability-wise between the kids. [pause] Er... I think they.... If they see you've made an effort they appreciate it as well, so, that's nice if kids do that.

Interviewer: And that's the kids in particular?

J: Yeah. The erm... the heads of department, if you work hard, they notice as well. [long pause] It sounds like blooming paradise. I don't know. It's just... I don't think everybody would be suited to it, but... I don't think I would have been suited to it younger. If I'd have gone in younger I'd have just, no I can't be bothered. But, erm... and it helps being laid back as well. So I think that helps with stress. Thinking about it, because there is another NQT ICT teacher and she's always stressed out and I'm just like, you know, you've just got to do your best,
haven't you? If they don't... If something goes wrong then you need to see what you can do to make it go differently next time. Or, it might not even be your problem. Something else could have happened before they even got into school which you have to remember is more likely to happen at our school. So... maybe it's... I dunno...
[laughs]

Interviewer: How do you think you've made a difference to the pupils?

J: I've put effort into their lessons, into the planning. [pause] I don't give in easily either. I think that's a difference between me and other teachers that they've had. Because, if they're not getting on well with something I still make them do it because you need to have the experience, and not just like, oh let's abandon this, sort of thing. So... their other teachers will just let them go on the internet a lot, whereas they complain their hand are gonna drop off because I've
always got them writing. [laughs] It goes against all the teaching, like, strategies and stuff, but they learn a lot more from copying, for some reason than they do from activity based things. And if they're copying, they're absolutely fine, no problem, and they can talk about what they've copied and stuff. It's amazing. But if you're on the same thing but in an activity... It may be confidence, actually, from their point of view... they just don't like it, so there's no point in doing it, because they just don't like it, and they won't... they won't learn anything. So... I've forgotten what the question was, then, I drifted off. [laughs]

Interviewer: How you've made a difference to the pupils?

J: I'm quite strict on discipline, or I try to be. I do find myself flagging sometimes. I am... sometimes it can be overwhelming because there are some really quite disturbed kids when I think about it, and it
can be quite a challenge with them. I just sort of... I almost sort of ignore those really if they're playing up, not normally, and get on with... making sure that each of the kids leave the room knowing a little bit more than they did before. And... I'm, touch wood, quite lucky because I get on well with most of the kids, so... that makes it easier. And that's a difference because I talk to them. That's why I like smaller classes so you can go round even, at least for a minute or so, with each of the children. So I consciously make an effort to look at what they've done every day, every time. So, I think they like that, they like the attention. Even the older kids like their books being marked. I just like... [laughs] there's so many of you but you put a little tick in their book and it makes all the difference to them. I've had them thank me for comments I've made in their book, and I've had other ones that I've put... quite blunt with my comments, so... I think

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my most blunt one was... we'd had a test and it was out of sixty-nine and this kid got nine. So I wrote on it that somebody who'd never been to a business studies lesson could have scored much higher than that. What does he want to do with his life? And he's been fine since that, because I think they appreciate the honesty as well. Well, you've got to. You can't say you're doing OK, but... you're not, you need to accept that, and hope for a change or hope and think, well, no I don't want to do this at all and maybe something else I want to do instead, which, you know, when we were... when I was at school that would never have been an option. Do what you were told to do and that's it. So... it's different...

Interviewer: Which year groups do you teach?

J: 11 to 16.

Interviewer: 11-16. So, you teach right across the secondary phase?
J: Er... at the moment, I don't do 9 and 11 but that's how the timetable works out.

Interviewer: You mentioned also the support of colleagues in the school. Would you like to say more about the colleagues who give you support, you've mentioned heads of departments but also the mutual support that NQTs offer to each other. Tell me about those colleagues, who are they?

J: Name and shame them [laughs]. Erm... Florette and I are both NQT ICT, so my room is directly above hers. Erm... So, it's just someone to walk downstairs to and chat to and stuff. That's nice. We're sharing the same experiences. Erm... although we look at things differently which has become apparent, but... it's still nice to have someone there to share the experience with.

Erm... Chris, who's D&T, just... we chat a lot in the staffroom. He's quite, you know... he talks about what's... you know, what went on and... the good and bad things about
lessons and stuff. I see... I only really see Jenine in meetings but, occasionally I chat to her in the staffroom. I have weekly meetings with the head of the business studies department, so... He's the deputy head anyway, so... She gets a lot done for me [laughs]. I get on really, really well with her. Erm. Head of IT, she's really nice, get on well with her. Although at times she can be vague... If you ask a specific question she has this way of answering the question, you think you've got your answer and you walk away and you're like... Ah! Is that what I've asked. [laughs] But, she's very nice. I get on well with her, so I.... it's not a problem going back and asking again. Erm... So she's fine. Erm... Head of RE's really nice and Mr Chaudhury opposite's really nice. Mr Beauchamp's opposite. We chat and Beauchamp's form group's the worst. They're Satan's kids. They've somehow got like a... a pack instinct. It's so bizarre, but
they're like... just like wolves or something. But I'm making headway with them. But it's like... sometimes you'll say something to one and the rest of the pack will come around and stuff. It's bizarre. But they're alright, well... they O... they're not even OK, they're getting towards OK with me but they're absolutely vile with other people. Horrendous. So... But he's been quite nice and given me strategies and been very supportive. Mr Moss in the library [laughs] You know, you need someone to take the kids... you know, you take them here. Rachel Hill-Brown... erm... Oh, that's right, when I just started work we took the kids on a three day trip to the Ranch and I was with Rachel and we got on really well there, and Mark as well... There's absolutely loads. You could literally just name everybody. Everybody's... you know, they all know what it's like there and the challenges. Interviewer: So, these are colleagues who
you are getting on well with. They offer you support, you can talk to them. Are there any colleagues you would specifically single out? Are there any issues that have occurred in your time at Mast House when you've needed support and someone's been there for you?

J: It depends on what the support's needed for as to who you approach as... erm.. I may... I'd approach Heather but... that's because we have the weekly meetings so we're able to discuss things in time. If I had a problem with like PSE then I would go to Mr Williams or Mrs Graham depending on which it was. You just go to whoever it's relevant to and you know that they will help you, so...

Interviewer: How do you offer support to your colleagues?

J: I try not to ask too much of them. [laughs] I have a.... because my room's like multi used, so I have a direct support by
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<td>offering IT advice within lessons. Erm... People have approached about my form because they are pretty wild, about strategies for the form. Erm... [pause] I don't know, they're not... People have asked for resources and things like that. Lesson plans and stuff. So... It's almost like natural to the school. It's not something that you're consciously aware of. If you're in a room... I wasn't even in... I was in the canteen and somebody 'phoned for some advice about the computer. So... It's not... I know I make it sound like it's paradise, but it's not paradise but there are these things which work extremely well within the school. So, that's good. Yeah. I must admit it is good. It's an excellent pastoral system. When I was at Shuttlecock it was vile. It was... there was no point having it. Heads of Year did full... full timetable. So they were never there to deal with things as they were happening, which is totally different to Mast House,</td>
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'cause they do... probably do half a timetable, but when they're on their frees they'll walk about, look into lessons, make sure that everything's going alright. If you have a problem you 'phone them. Bla-bla is playing up, he needs to be out the room, he's refused to go, and they will literally... because I'm like directly opposite and away from the head of Year 10, and he'll walk all the way down to come and take them out the room without any fuss or bother or anything, so... It's really good. [pause] I suppose you could say that if the children didn't give you such challenging behaviour then it may be different, but it is what's required for the behaviours and the attitudes that come into school. The school would fail otherwise.

Interviewer: Do you want to talk about that challenging behaviour? What is the nature of it? Give some examples.

J: You get verbal abuse. Swearing. Er...
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<td>Refusing to follow instructions. Skinning of teeth 'til there's no tomorrow. Erm... They constantly push... especially if you come into contact with a kid for the first time, they'll constantly push it just beyond as far as they can go and then withdraw back. And then again and again. So, like, we have a support room where kids are removed from lesson if they're hindering others' education. In that room it's... it can be absolutely horrific, 'cause... er... they'll come in in a foul mood, really tense, really agitated. They're not willing to listen. And if they don't know me as a teacher, then I'm just somebody sat in a room. So, I mean, I've had occasion where I've had to call the heads of year and have them removed from the room. Erm... [pause] It's mainly refusing to follow instructions, really. It's a big thing. You do get a lot of swearing there towards you, or they'll be walking away and they'll swear. So, again, you stop them and you tell them...</td>
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they have to go to the support room because it's not acceptable behaviour. [pause] I was pushed once. [laughs] I had slippy shoes on and I just slid across the carpet. It was funny, actually. I was trying not to laugh. Erm... [pause] Yeah. It's just things like that, but it is... It can be quite intensive, you can get a whole day of it. Once, all the year tens were hung over, somebody had their fifteenth birthday party, and they were absolutely horrible the next day, they were all vile. Why they even came into school because they all had hangovers, I don't know. But that was pretty tough.

Interviewer: It sounds from what you're saying that you're able to cope with that.

J: [laughs] Yeah. Definitely. You just have to deal with each situation as it comes up, really. Erm... Either deal with it yourself or get somebody else to deal with it. But as time's gone by, the situations become less frequent which... obviously is due to
development in your teaching style and increase in confidence really. And, perhaps, you don’t feel such a need to establish myself either anymore, so. I may have altered my standards a little bit. Interviewer: What is it about your teaching style that may have altered in order to get the necessary, dare I say, compliance from students? J: [laughs] [pause] I’m trying to think. [pause] I think I’m at... Well I’ve... Trying to think... Erm... I think I can be more... I am more informal with them than I was before so. There are more one to one relationships and comments. [pause] It’s the total opposite of my first placement really, in almost every respect, so.... So I’ve never really had to... had behavioural issues in the classroom. So that’s new, really for me. So it is a case of developing a style, because obviously my other style would have been too, too relaxed.
Interviewer: So, you're developing a new form of being relaxed in the job in the current school that you're working in. You say you've become more informal.

J: Hmm. I don't think there's a need for teachers to be distant from, you know. You need to keep it relevant to where, to where they're at and where you are and stuff, so... I think, yeah, I think I am quite informal with them.

Interviewer: Is that important for you in terms of why you teach and how you teach?

J: Yeah. I don't really see the need to try and create a sort of them and us, and trying to get respect that way. I think you get respect for who you are not what you do, and rather than trying to make yourself better than them in any way. I think the kids would resent it if I was like that anyway, because of where they're coming from, so...

Maybe.

Interviewer: In your timeline you said that
you didn’t enjoy people not being organised.

Who were the people you were referring to there?

J: What did I put?

Interviewer: Literally that [reading from timeline] “I least enjoy poor behaviour and other people not being organised” with a couple of exclamation marks.

2060 J: [laughs] I just... I'm just always so well prepared for my lessons. I don't like things that are left to the last minute or if you're asked to do something and people leave it. So, you know. People can't believe it. If I say I’m going to do something I do it the same day. I’m not going to leave it so I can forget about it or things like that. I don't like having to remind people, and I go to remind people after a couple of days whereas some people think they can leave things for a week and not think about it, but I think if you've got to do something you do it then. Not there and then, but you've got to do it as
soon as you can, then it's out the way. I think in teaching you do have to be organised. It's like today, I wasn't expecting to teach a lesson and I had to... I had an hour's notice and I had to get all my stuff ready. If I wasn't organised, I wouldn't be able to do that. It was lucky I had my laptop with me which has got all my resources on it as well. Mmm. I think I don't like it when people are vague, either. I'm quite a [pause] action sort of person or things have to have meaning. So... I don't know. Perhaps... Maybe. I don't like all the gumph that you get. They're just words on a page. They only have meaning if the author has thought about who the audience is going to be which is not often the case with the strategies and stuff that we get coming through. They're just like... aimed at higher ability kids and stuff like that. I don't like things that don't.... [pause]

Interviewer: When you say the strategies
J: Key Stage 3 strategy. I think out of two lessons we did that in about six weeks and only just managed it. [laughs] So heaven knows when we’re supposed to do the other four. And the kids don’t respond to the language they use either. It’s... Their job is extremely difficult really. Trying to write something that suit all the languages in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. But... I don’t know, maybe there’s a call for something regional there, I don’t know.

Interviewer: You mention that you’re a member of NASUWT. Were there any particular reasons why you joined that organisation?

J: Erm.. I’m trying to remember the circumstances. I looked on the web and I looked at them all and just decided.

Interviewer: Did you go through a process of evaluation, then, in terms of looking at them and thinking, well...
J: Yeah, I remember I thought NUT... I thought they were too political for some reason. I don't know why. I don't think they represented my views very well. And there's another one, isn't there, some headmasters and... but didn't really. So, yeah, NASUWT... [laughs]

Interviewer: So, there's a feeling that they represent your views. Are there any specific aspects of that which are particularly important to you in terms of being a member of a teacher union?

J: Hmm. [pause] I'm not... I'm not particularly bothered about being a member of a union, to be really honest. You have to join one and out of the choices I thought they were the best.

Interviewer: At school level, I don't know if you are involved in the work of the union or at local level?

J: No.

Interviewer: Would you anticipate becoming
more involved.

J: No.

Interviewer: Is there any reason for that?

J: [laughs] I don't know. I've always viewed, like, local union reps as being quite militant and stuff. [laughs] I don't mind strikes, actually. [laughs] I was let down by the union in the past as well. So, I... I'm just not that bothered.

Interviewer: Do you mean a union when you were working at the Benefits Agency?

J: Yes. The PS.. erm... I wasn't... I can't say I was particularly bothered about being a member. It was just something you did when you joined. They gave you a form, you signed it and you're a member of this union. It didn't actually afford you any more rights or anything like that so...

Interviewer: Are you a member of any other organisations, not only in teaching but also generally.

J: No.
Interviewer: Have you done any voluntary work since leaving school?

J: Erm... I did a short time of voluntary work on a Saturday. A kind of computer club really, but that was only two months. Erm...

Interviewer: Was that working with young people or...

J: Yeah. School age kids. [pause]

Interviewer: Was that something you wanted to do or were persuaded to do?

J: It was what Thomas Telford had asked IBDL me to do and I had to get... to start there in the September.

Interviewer: So, it was very much linked to the job, really?

J: Yeah. I mean I had thought about doing something like that, but didn’t have the time before.

Interviewer: Are you a member of any religious organisations?

J: No.

Interviewer: You mention pastimes, you’ve
mentioned socialising, gardening, gym, cooking. Is there anything about those hobbies that is particularly important to you?

J: I think they're all really mainly about relaxation, really. Erm... I just enjoy gardening. You can get very visual results about what you've done and a sense of accomplishment. The same with gym really. Keeping fit. Cooking as well; it's relaxing and you get a result of some kind from it.

Interviewer: Is there any connection between those activities and what you do Monday to Friday when you go into school. Do you make any connection between them? You know, how some people do keep fit to de-stress after a stressful day?

J: No. It's just something I enjoy. I don't think I'd do it if I got stressed. There's no point. Gardening is stress in itself, when you think about it. But when you've done it you get that sense of something you've accomplished.
Interviewer: You described yourself in your timeline as [reading from timeline] "friendly, loyal, humorous, approachable, impulsive and caring. Firstly, I'll ask whether there are any other attributes you would like to add to that list and then why you describe yourself in that way.

J: Erm... I think that very much... as much as you can sum anybody up, that sums me up really. Erm... I think they're very positive words. They are buzz words, but they're very relevant, I think. Erm... Just goes to show some of the different dimensions, the contradictions within me, I think. Erm... And why I chose those words, it's because it's things I do or things I think or feel, so...

Interviewer: Those words relate to you as a person, in your own life. Do those words sum you up in teaching? Do those words underpin your approach to teaching?

J: Yeah. I think you have to be a very open person to succeed in teaching.
| Interviewer: Not all teachers think like that. | A C D |
| J: Then I suppose I wouldn't do it if I thought that it was different to probably the core of what I'm about, really, so... | |
| Interviewer: Is there anything about yourself that you would want to change? | A J L N |
| J: I'd like to be ten years younger. [laughs] And know what I know now, sort of thing. [laughs] If only I could stay 20. You're just able to do so much more, aren't you. [laughs] Never be tired ever. [laughs] Erm... is there anything I would do different? Is that the question? | |
| Interviewer: Is there anything you would want to change about yourself. But, that's OK too, is there anything you would want to have done differently? | A K M |
| J: Mmm. [pause] Not really. If there's something you want to change about yourself, then why haven't you done it? Not really. So. I think you're constantly changing by who you interact with, etcetera, and | |

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situations that are thrown up. I think if there was something I consciously want to change, I would find a way to do it really.

Interviewer: You say [in the timeline] that in the future you would like to move to a middle school, progress to Deputy Head and move out of the city. How do you feel you will go about achieving that vision?

J: I'm going to move to Worcester in four or five years' time. They have first, second and high schools there. I prefer Key Stage 3. That's my plan. [laughs]

Interviewer: You've devised your own life plan, at least for the next five years?

J: Yes.

Interviewer: What about the deputy head bit?

J: I think that's more of a long term thing, really. I think the next step is head of department or even Key Stage 3 coordinator. Take it from there, really.

Interviewer: Does that imply, becoming a
deputy head, that you would still have regular and a lot of contact with the children or are you looking for a more administrative role?

J: I think you still need to have a good deal of contact, but... I think I see the deputy head's role as a lot being pastoral as well. So, being there to support the kids and things like that. So... I'd still like to keep the contact but just in a different context really, not always as teacher pupil.

Interviewer: So, the pastoral thing keeps coming back through the interview. It links to your desire to be approachable and caring.

J: I think it's vital for any school to have a caring attitude.

Interviewer: It seems that it's vital to the school and is it vital to you as a teacher. Am I right?

J: Mmm. It's my personality really, isn't it?

Interviewer: Thanks for that. You say also that your future life aspirations are to work
on the house and to do ICT courses. Can you say why these are important to you?

J: I've just literally moved into the house, so, you just want to make it your own. The colour of these walls. Oh... It's a summer job I think. It's too big to paint now.

Interviewer: Why the ICT courses? Is that something that's linked to the job?

J: I've got... I've got some A level books that I want to work through during the summer.

Interviewer: So, it's a sort of personal and professional development thing?

J: Yes. Continually developing your role. The A level stuff I don't think it's long before it will be GCSE stuff because it's the nature of how technology is constantly improving.

Interviewer: Is there anything further that you would want to say about your life as a teacher?

J: Erm... I think I've really talked about it all. It's very difficult to answer that question because... I sort of take a step back I think
I've talked about it all. I just feel it's [teaching] natural, really. So... It's not... I don't know. I just feel it's natural, so it's hard to view it as special or different or anything like that. It's just what I do. And probably what I do well. So... I think I was definitely meant to be in this kind of role. It just sort of suits who I am a lot. Erm.. So, yeah. I enjoy the challenges of getting it wrong as well as getting it right. Erm... You've got it wrong and then you get it right, it's amazing. You get it wrong and then you get it wrong again.... tough. [laughs] You're not meant to do that. Sometimes you have to say I can't do this, I can't teach that, and then go out and, you know, and think outside of the box and, you know... But, quite often, because of the language problems actually, which is something I should have said, sometimes you do have to think out of what is conventional in order to explain it. Drawing pictures, for example. They've got their own
little white boards that they can rub off and write things on. Using things like that. They've got something instant and visual in front of them. Taking them out on trips and stuff. Trying to get a trip to Drayton Manor Park because they love it, so. I think that's actually, it's something that we've not talked about, but I think is important and is vital to be successful as a teacher, is to have experience with the children outside of school. Erm... Took our form group to the Ranch, taking the year 10s to Jaguar. We're looking to take some of the other classes to the City Learning Centre, just so you're on a... in a different environment, really. So that... you can see a different side of them and vice-versa. [pause]

Interviewer: And it's important that they see a different side of you?

J: I think so. It makes you less distant, I think. [long pause] [laugh] Are you waiting for me to say something really profound?
2360  [laughs]

Interviewer: No, it was just one of those pregnant pauses. You never know what might happen. I just want to ask you one or two questions about the research process so far. Is there anything about the research process that you would want to comment on in terms of whether it was useful or....

J: I think generally the introductory part was fine. The letter and telephone call. There is a lot of information given, but not necessarily too much. Erm... And the way that you bring it around, that was good. I was shocked by the size of the initial questionnaire.

Interviewer: The timeline?

J: It is almost overwhelming. I don't know if it would be a good idea if that was sort of split in two. Focus on before in one and so you could have the first interview and then left it.

Because it is a lot. You do look at it and think... But I just sort of did a bit, went away,
did a bit. [laughs] So, it was over a series of days. Erm... I think also I would have left it a bit longer next time because it... between when I picked up the questionnaire and when we had the initial interview. Because I'm not sure if I would have wanted to have gone back to it again. But then I suppose you talk about it in the interview. I'm not sure. But for something that you pick up put down, pick up put down, sometimes it is better to have a longer space than a shorter space. Erm... The interviews have been fine. I don't think you... You've told me what to expect, but it is the sort of thing that you don't expect until you've heard the questions, really. So that's been fine. I've not been bothered about being taped. [laughs] Apart from the pregnant pauses. [laughs]

Interviewer: Those comments are extremely helpful. I was concerned about the timeline document. It did seem huge, but it could
work to separate the document out in the same way as we did the interviews.

J: Yes. It would become less of a block. You do have to get a lot of facts in order to create as much of a....

Interviewer: Yes. You do realise that in a short space of time I'm trying to get the essence of you. And in a way you can never achieve that, but just getting more than a vague sort of characterisation or caricature. Hopefully that will be reflected in the life story. Thanks.
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* See review of non-lexical texts
APPENDIX 4: NON-LEXICAL TEXTS CODING

Code K: Pause Texts

Jay’s talk was reviewed to consider what if any inferences could be drawn from the pauses or silences in his speech. The transcript contained numerous occurrences. The pauses in Jay’s talk appeared to be associated with a number of issues/factors in Jay’s talk: current teaching experiences; interpersonal relationships; educational experiences; working class upbringing/poverty; critical personal/professional incidents; aspiration to become a teacher; professionality; race/ethnicity; other. These issues were not mutually exclusive and there were areas of overlap between issues/factors (for example, Jay’s professionality orientation/current teaching experiences; aspiration to become a teacher). Pauses in Jay’s talk occurred during and at the end of his speech, often connecting different or related topics or issues. This made categorisation difficult and led to double-coding of some textual thematic strands. Additionally, there were occasions where a pause in Jay’s talk appeared to denote acts of remembering, recall and occasions where Jay was engaged in the process of organising his thoughts before speaking. The majority of the occasions where Jay’s talk was
punctuated by pauses tended to be associated with moments when Jay was discussing issues he found difficult to express through speech or where there were topics and issues which were in some way challenging to Jay.

**Code L: Erm.... Texts**

The use of the non-lexical 'erm' (or 'er') was examined as it occurred in Jay's talk to see what, if any, inferences could be drawn. The use of the non-lexical 'erm' appeared to operate at three principal levels: as an interjection or form of linkage between words, ideas or events in a speech; to indicate the act of remembering or recall - allowing Jay a brief moment to organise his thoughts and words; and to suggest hesitancy within Jay's speech. This is not to suggest that these types of speech were mutually exclusive: there were occasions where the use of the non-lexical 'erm' suggested an act of remembering and hesitancy at the same time. However, it is the third form of the use of 'erm' which appeared most significant in helping to interpret Jay's story; these were the occasions where Jay demonstrated a degree of hesitancy in his talk. The occasions when Jay expressed hesitancy suggested his difficulty in discussing certain issues. Much of Jay's hesitancy appeared to be linked to his sense of personal and professional confidence and his desire to prove himself.
to others (the researcher) whilst not betraying his sense of personal identity.

**Code M: Mmm... Texts**

The use of the non-lexical ‘mmm’ was examined to see what, if any, inferences could be drawn. The use of the non-lexical ‘mmm’ appeared to be associated with those parts of Jay’s text where he was thinking and trying to speak at the same time. The use of ‘mmm’ provided short spaces to enable Jay to recapture or access his memory. It also appeared to be associated with times when Jay was less sure about how to interpret events in his life. It appeared that the use of ‘mmm’ could signify occasions where Jay was concerned about how to give expression to particular feelings he had, perhaps signifying moments when Jay was less confident or less willing to divulge how he really felt, privately, to the interviewer. The use of the non-lexical ‘mmm’ also provided some ‘noise’ to break the silence between Jay’s contributions during the course of the interviews.

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Jay's talk was reviewed to consider what, if any, inferences could be drawn from the laughter in his speech. The transcript contained numerous such occurrences. The laughter in Jay's talk appeared to be associated with a number of issues/factors in Jay's talk: principally where Jay's talk connected with issues of personal vulnerability and self-confidence; also where Jay's talk connected with moments of personal enjoyment/achievement, his father, close friends, fond memories, background/upbringing and critical life/professional incidents. Laughter occurred in Jay's talk usually at the beginning or end of phrases in his speech, but also included some examples of laughter mid way in his speech.
Dear Teachers' Lives and Careers:

Research Project on Teacher Identities and Agency

In the United Kingdom, the lives and careers of teachers from black and other minority ethnic groups has not been a key feature within the professional, scholarly or political debate. Research which has been undertaken into the careers of these teachers has, however, suggested that they are few in number, and that these teachers often experience discrimination and harassment in access to employment and throughout the course of their careers.

It is particularly important to understand how and in what ways discrimination affects the working lives of teachers, whether the discrimination concerned is as a result of racism, sexism or for other reasons. However, discrimination is not the sole experience that black teachers have, and it is important that research does not contribute to the stereotyping of black teachers' lives. Indeed, for some teachers issues such as the support of family and friends,
religious beliefs, political affiliations and the social and professional networks to which they belong may be much more important in defining who they are as teachers.

In the last few years, the UK Government has agreed targets to increase the proportions of minority ethnic and male teachers entering the teaching profession. However, in order to successfully increase the numbers of these teachers, and to ensure that they are able to reach their full potential, it is essential that researchers and policy-makers enter into a dialogue with minority ethnic group and male teachers to identify their reasons for entering the profession, and to develop a rounded understanding, from the perspectives of these teachers, of what it means to be a teacher, and whether and in what ways teaching is an important part of their lives.

In view of this need, NASUWT is supporting research on teachers' lives and careers. This study will explore the views and opinions of teachers, and, in particular, the lives of male teachers of black African/Caribbean, black British, mixed race or other black heritage. In short, this study seeks to explore the lives of teachers and contribute their views and experiences to the national debate about the future of the teaching profession.
From the Association's membership records, you have been identified as a teacher who could make a very important contribution to this study, which is one of the first of its kind to take place in the UK. Your participation would involve giving some of your time to talk about your teaching career and your aspirations for the future. Interviews would take place at locations convenient to you and you would not be expected to travel. The research is being undertaken in a manner which will assure the confidentiality of all research participants and conforms to the ethical standards for research as published by the British Educational Research Association. Your details and those relating to your past/present school(s) would be anonymised in the report published as a result of this work.

I hope that you will be able to participate in this study. To find out more about this study, please contact me at the above address, either by telephone (0121 xxx xxxx), by email (patrick.roach@xxx.xxxxxxxx.uk) or by using the reply slip enclosed. If you are unable to participate, it would also be helpful if you would complete and return the attached reply slip.

I look forward to hearing from you very soon.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick Roach

enc.

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Dear [NAME]

Teachers' Lives and Careers:
Research Project on Teacher Identities and Agency

I am grateful to you for giving me the opportunity to contact you about a research study in which I am currently involved.

In the United Kingdom, the lives and careers of teachers from black and other minority ethnic groups has not been a key feature within the professional, scholarly or political debate. Research which has been undertaken into the careers of these teachers has, however, suggested that they are few in number, and that these teachers often experience discrimination and harassment in access to employment and throughout the course of their careers.

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contribute their views and experiences to the national academic and political debate about the future of the teaching profession.

In writing to you, I am sure that you could make an important contribution to this study, which is one of the first of its kind to take place in the UK. Your participation would involve giving some of your time to talk about your teaching career and your aspirations for the future. Interviews would take place at locations convenient to you and you would not be expected to travel. The research is being undertaken in a manner which will assure the confidentiality of all research participants and conforms to the ethical standards for research as published by the British Educational Research Association. Your details and those relating to your past/present school(s) would be anonymised in the report published as a result of this work.

I hope that you will be able to participate in this research. If you are interested in knowing more about this study, please contact me at the above address, either by telephone on 0121 *** **** (office) or 07*** ***** (mobile), or by email at patrick.roach@******.****.uk

I look forward to hearing from you very soon.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick Roach

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APPENDIX 7: INITIAL PARTICIPANT PRO-FORMA REPLY FORM

Teachers' Lives and Careers:
Research Project on Teacher Identities and Agency

Name:

Please tick one box as appropriate:

- I would like to be involved as a participant in the Teacher Identities and Agency research project
- I would like more information about the research
- I do not wish to be involved in the research project

If you would like to be involved in the research, or would like to receive more information, please provide the following details:
Preferred address for receipt of future correspondence:


______________________________


______________________________ Postcode __________

Tel. No.:  Daytime___________  Evening _________

email address: ________________________________

Thank you.

Please return your completed form in the envelope provided to:

Patrick Roach

[ADDRESS]
APPENDIX 8: PARTICIPANT DATA CONFIRMATION PROFORMA

Teachers' Lives and Careers
Research Project on Teacher Identities and Agency

Your Name: ____________________________________________
School Name: __________________________________________
School Address: _________________________________________

Is your school:  
- Primary
- Secondary
- Other
(please state)

Which age group are you in?
- below 30 years
- 30-39 years
- 40-50 years
- 50 years and over

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Which of the following best describes your ethnic origin?

- Black African
- Black Caribbean
- Black British
- Mixed race/heritage
- Other ethnic group

(please describe)

How long have you been teaching?

- 0-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5-10 years
- over 10 years

Where did you qualify to teach?

(give name of institution/country)

In which of the following categories are you currently employed?

- Teacher
- Deputy head teacher
- Headteacher

Thank You.

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APPENDIX 9: PRE-FIELDWORK PROMOTIONAL LEAFLET

Teachers' Lives and Careers
Research Project on Teacher Identities and Agency

In the United Kingdom, the lives and careers of teachers from black and other minority ethnic groups has not been a key feature within the professional, scholarly or political debates. However, research which has been undertaken into the careers of these teachers has confirmed that they are few in number. This research will explore the lives and careers of black teachers and will inform the current understanding of what needs to be done to effectively recruit and retain black teachers.

The research aims to consider:

- why individuals choose to become teachers;
- the factors which impact on individuals' experiences of teaching;
- the values and motivation of teachers;
- the impact of teaching on the lives of individual teachers.

This study is being undertaken at the University of Warwick with the
support of the NASUWT. It seeks to build on research which has been undertaken in the UK and internationally.

If you are interested in taking part in this research, or to find out more, contact:

Patrick Roach
0121 *** **** (telephone)
07*** ****** (mobile)
email: patrick.roach@****.***.uk

If you are a male teacher, of black African-Caribbean / black British / mixed heritage and teach in a primary, secondary or special school, we would like to hear from you.

Your participation in this study would involve giving some of your time to talk about your teaching career and your aspirations for the future. Interviews would take place at times and locations convenient to you and you would not be expected to travel. The confidentiality of all research participants is also assured.
Teachers' Lives and Careers
Research Project on Teacher Identities and Agency

What is this research about?

The research aims to explore the lives and careers of black men teachers. It will seek to explore a number of issues relating to the professional and political identities of black men teachers, and consider how teacher identities and philosophy inform the work of teachers, and the networks in which they engage.

The research recognises and seeks to build on an existing body of scholarship in relation to teachers' lives and careers. Much of this previous work has highlighted at least one key issue: namely, that in order to understand teachers and their work, it is necessary to understand the person that the teacher is. This research proceeds on the basis that there is a fundamental relationship between the teacher's personal biography and his/her professional practice.

The research will explore:

- what motivates black men to enter the teaching profession?
how do black men teachers view themselves and their work?
how important is the job of teaching in the lives of black men teachers?
how do black men teachers maintain their commitment to the job?
why do black men teachers teach?

Why is this research important?
The UK Government has set targets for increasing the proportions of black teachers and male teachers in the profession. In order to achieve this goal of a more representative profession, it is necessary to understand the professional and career motivations of men and black communities. This study seeks to explore these issues.

At the same time, there are no other research studies of black men teachers in Britain. An extensive review of the scholarship from overseas has identified only one small-scale Canadian study that has focussed on the life of a black man teaching in schools.

How many people are participating in the research?
The research will involve the development of detailed life history accounts of black men teachers. This is not a survey of teachers' opinions, but an attempt to understand in detail the nature of what it means to be a black man teaching.
The benefits of this approach will be revealed by the detailed and in-depth nature of the life stories which individual teachers share. The number of teachers to be included is not pre-determined, and will depend on the nature of the life stories that emerge.

How are research participants to be identified?

Research participants will be drawn from teachers in primary and secondary schools in the West and East Midlands regions of England.

The research participants will be identified using a range of approaches which have been evaluated in order to limit the potential for research bias. The following sources will be used to access teacher participants:

- black men teachers who are members of a professional teaching association;
- black men teachers employed in schools in a local education authority;
- black men teachers recommended to the researcher by other teachers during the course of the research study.
How is the research to be conducted?

The research method is based on a life history approach. In brief, this will involve the conduct of one-to-one, face-to-face in-depth qualitative interviews with selected teachers.

The precise number of interviews undertaken with each individual teacher will depend on the nature and complexity of issues revealed by each teacher's life story. However, as a guide, the following process will be common to all teacher participants:

- pre-interview exercise;
- initial telling of the life story (first phase interview);
- exploration of key thematic elements from the life story (second phase interview);
- exploration of specific life story elements (second/third phase interview);
- presentation of the final 'completed' life story (third/final phase interview);
- final review/evaluation of the life story and the research process (third/final phase interview).

What will be the practical implications of the research for individual participants?
The development of each teacher's life story will be based on a collaboration between the researcher and each teacher participant. This is not a process which is likely to be achievable in a single, short interview.

Initially, each research participant will be asked to prepare a time line of their own life. These life lines will be utilised throughout the research process and will provide the basis for the interviews. They will include details of:

- family background – birthplace/country, occupation, home location, ethnic origin of parents/grandparents;
- date and place of birth of participant;
- siblings – dates of birth, occupations, home locations;
- participant's education and upbringing – including, schools and colleges attended, university attended and courses of study;
- participant's childhood/adolescent life and career aspirations;
- participant's own domestic and family history – including details of home locations, marriage/partnership, children;
- participant's work career – including details of paid and unpaid work;
- participant's teaching career — initial training, sector/age-range, employment history, types and characteristics of schools worked in, positions held, promotion history, job changes, locations;
- critical incidents that have shaped/occurred during the participant's professional life;
- membership of professional bodies and political organisations and any positions held;
- other interests and pursuits.

The life history interviews will focus on the issues identified in the time lines, and will provide the material for each individual's completed life story. Interviews will be conducted at locations and times convenient to each teacher participant.

**How will the issue of confidentiality be addressed?**

The issue of confidentiality will be discussed with each research participant prior to their participation in the study. Anonymity will be assured for each participant. Each life story will be subject to prior approval by the research participant.

**How will the research be reported, and to whom?**
It is intended that the research will be reported in a number of arenas, including within the academic/scholarly community. At the same time, it is envisaged that the general issues arising from the research will be communicated to a wider audience of policy-makers and opinion-formers, through academic and professional publications. Copies of relevant papers can be provided to each research participant.

Finally, a report of the research will be submitted for post-graduate assessment to the University of Warwick Institute of Education.

The life stories to be used for the purposes of dissemination will be subject to prior agreement by each research participant.

**What will be the rights of research participants?**

- Participants will have the right to be informed about the aims, purposes and likely publication of findings arising from the research and any potential consequences of participation.
- Participants will be invited to give their informed consent before participating in research.
- Participants should expect to be treated with honesty, openness and respect throughout the research.
- Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.