

1 Introduction

Going back to your marriage, when you had sex, who made the first move?
ELMA (laughs) I'm not telling. (laughs) No, I think we were both of the same mind. No, I don't think – I don't think there was anything like that. If, if he wanted something he'd tell me, in a nice kind of a way.
How did you know that he was feeling amorous?
(laughs) I didn't; I just had to guess.
What were the signs?
Pardon?
What were the signs?
Well, the usual, two arms round me instead of one. (laughs)¹

Oral history and private lives

This book addresses sexuality and intimacy, especially within the context of marriage, among ordinary people in England during the mid-twentieth century, approximately 1918–63. It presents evidence from an oral history study which solicited first-hand accounts from eighty-nine men and women, drawn from both the middle and the working classes, whose adolescence, marriage and childrearing occurred during the interwar and immediately post-war decades.² In adopting oral history as the prime research tool for this book we hope to provide a sophisticated and empirically based portrait of sexuality and intimacy within marriages during the interwar and early post-war decades of the twentieth century.³ The interviewees were asked how they had learned about

¹ Elma msf/jm/bl/#42, born in working-class Rotherham in 1909 (her father was a shunter on the railways). In 1933 she married a Manchester policeman two years older than her, who died in 1972. One child born 1934. She worked throughout her marriage as a cook in company canteens. All names of respondents and of persons mentioned in the interviews are pseudonyms. In the text dates in brackets after interviewees' names indicate their year of birth.
² Through an oversight, one never-married individual was interviewed, Pearl (1915) msf/kf/bl/#40. Thus, throughout we refer to eighty-eight married interviewees and eighty-nine informants altogether.
³ The collection of eighty-nine oral histories took place between 1998 and 2001 and was funded by an ESRC grant to Simon Szreter, Grant Number R000236621. Kate Fisher was the project's Research Officer. The research was given further support through a Wellcome Project Grant

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sex in childhood and youth, how they had approached sex in adolescence and courtship, what sex had meant to them as adults and what part it played in their marriage relationships, particularly during their childbearing years when the issues of birth control and family planning would have had to be addressed. The central conclusion is the importance of privacy to intimacy within marriage especially in relation to the expression of sexuality.

Individuals presented marriages as private places where sex in particular was not part of an ongoing, reflective discussion, even between husband and wife.⁴ In this context, it would appear to be a particular challenge systematically to collect first-hand oral history testimony on a topic which (as we conclude) many felt – and still feel – ought to be kept private.⁵

awarded to K. Fisher, Grant Ref: 059811/2/JM/HH/SW, an ESRC Fellowship to Simon Szreter, Award Number R000271041 and an AHRC Research Leave Term in 2006. Both authors conducted all aspects of the research and analysis together and should be regarded as equal and joint authors of this book. We undertook the construction of the text as a fully collaborative and joint exercise. Each author has had primary responsibility for four substantive chapters and produced the first draft (Simon chapters 2, 5, 6 and 7 and Kate chapters 3, 4, 8 and 9), but all chapters were subsequently edited and reworked by both authors innumerable times. See this section, immediately below, and the Appendices for fuller information about the research design, the interviewing process and the interviewees.

⁴ This broadly conforms with the insightful, historically informed contemporaneous views of Norbert Elias in *The Civilizing Process*, transl. Edmund Jephcott, revised edition, eds. Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom and Stephen Mennell (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), esp. 158–60 (first published in German in 1939). This construction of privacy in marital sexuality corresponds to valuing privacy of the person, privacy of ‘personal space’ and privacy in personal relations, which are three of the six dimensions of privacy which Brian Harrison sees as significant for thinking about the history of the shifting relationship between the public and the private in modern British history since 1800 (Brian Harrison, ‘The Public and the Private in Modern Britain’, ch. 19 in *Civil Histories: Essays Presented to Sir Keith Thomas*, eds. Peter Burke, Brian Harrison, Paul Slack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 338). For a detailed enquiry into representations of the public and the private during the prior, early modern period, see Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

⁵ Previous oral histories have often only asked women about ‘family life’, and have been more limited in scope, or else focused on illicit, extra-marital sexual experiences, rather than the complex codes, norms and expectations of sex within marriage. See for example, Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society* (2nd edn, London: Routledge, 1992, first published 1975), Diana Gittins, *Fair Sex: Family Size and Structure, 1900–39* (London: Hutchinson, 1982), Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman’s Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890–1940* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), Steve Humphries, *A Secret World of Sex: Forbidden Fruit, the British Experience 1900–1950* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1988), Jacqueline Sarsby, *Missuses and Mouldrunners: An Oral History of Women Pottery-Workers at Work and at Home* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1988), Maureen Sutton, *We Didn’t Know Aught: Study of Sexuality, Superstition and Death in Women’s Lives in Lincolnshire During the 1930’s, 40’s and 50’s* (Stamford: P. Watkins, 1992), Elizabeth Roberts, *Women and Families: An Oral History, 1940–1970* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995), Lucinda McCray Beier, *For Their Own Good: The Transformation of English Working-Class Health Culture, 1880–1970* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008), ch. 5. Slater and Woodside’s study was an early contemporary enquiry about marriage relationships which did interview both men and women – indeed, they separately interviewed 102 sets of (hospitalised), mostly working-class (some had come from clerical work) servicemen and their wives from the London area (Eliot Slater and

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ENID No, I am a very private person ... [the] warden ... asked me, 'Was it alright?' I said, 'Yes', but, erm, having said that, I never tell anybody my business. I keep myself to myself; that's the way I've been all my life.⁶

Despite the importance of privacy for the individuals whose life stories form the basis of this book, many were prepared to discuss sex, marriage and intimacy with us.⁷ These interviews contest the widespread assumption that the subject of sex within marriage is too sensitive for such study.⁸ Other researchers see the construction of interview narratives about sex as exercises in the breaking of a taboo: 'The interviews themselves were transgressions of the silencing in which women had been trained.'⁹ We are less convinced that our interviews represent moments in which taboos were broken, making us party to secret sexual narratives. Rather, in response to skilled interviewing, respondents chose what aspects of their life histories to reveal and discuss on their own terms, and for their own reasons.

In part the obtaining of detailed interview material on the private lives of respondents reflects the sensitive and careful approach adopted. Various strategies were employed to ensure that those interviewed were not simply a select minority prepared to talk openly about sex, whose experiences and attitudes were not broadly typical of their generation.¹⁰ We did not advertise

Moya Woodside, *Patterns of Marriage: A Study of Marriage Relationships in the Urban Working Classes* (London: Cassell and Co., 1951)). Their findings are of special comparative interest as the birth dates of those interviewed, 1896–1922, were very similar to those questioned by us for this book.

⁶ Enid msf/kf/bl/#49. Born in 1909 and married in 1939 to a trainee mill manager three years her junior, lower-middle-class Enid had three live-births and herself worked part-time as a secretary when her children were older.

⁷ In the late 1940s Mass Observation was 'startled ... at the friendliness and willingness of all whom they met [on the street] to talk about sex subjects'. Mass Observation, File Report 3110 'General Attitudes to Sex', April 1949, 'Article One: Sex Attitudes', 1.

⁸ Richard C. Lewontin, 'Sex, Lies, and Social Science', *New York Review of Books* 42, no. 7 (1995). See also, Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Practical Guide for Social Scientists* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 128–9. Lewontin reported that in interviews with mill-women in Carboro, North Carolina, '[m]y co-researchers and I decided it would be useless of me to ask male narrators about sexual practices or for them to ask women. But even the women I talked to were unable to discuss the topic.' For a broader discussion of the problems see O. O. Dare and J. G. Cleland, 'Reliability and Validity of Survey Data on Sexual Behaviour', *Health Transition Review* 4, no. 2 (1994).

⁹ Patricia Zavella, '"Playing with Fire": The Gendered Construction of Chicana/Mexicana Sexuality', in *The Gender/Sexuality Reader: Culture, History, Political Economy*, eds. R. N. Lancaster and M. D. Leonardo (New York: Routledge, 1997), 393. For a successful and insightful study of courtship, marriage and sexuality based on life-story interviews conducted with twenty-six Mexican and Mexican-American women, see Jennifer S. Hirsch, *A Courtship after Marriage: Sexuality and Love in Mexican Transnational Families* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

¹⁰ Claus Adolph Moser and Graham Kalton, *Survey Methods in Social Investigation* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), 127–44, Humphries, *A Secret World of Sex*, 10–11, Raymond M. Lee, *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics* (London: Sage Publications, 1993), Roy Porter and

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for participants, but instead asked local authorities for access to day centres and social groups where a short presentation was made and initial contacts with respondents could be established, trust gained and the aims of the project explained. This provided potential interviewees with the opportunity to meet researchers in an entirely unpressurised context, ask questions and to decide at their leisure whether or not to be interviewed.¹¹ Moreover, that contact was made through the local authority helped to legitimise the project and reassure respondents that we could be trusted with personal stories. Although certainly not all those who had heard our presentation subsequently volunteered to be interviewed, this approach led to significant numbers agreeing to take part once they understood the purpose of the study, how it was being conducted and once the first few interviewees reported back favourably to others about the experience. To a lesser extent, contact was made through the local authorities' home help systems and at residential care homes.

A flexible, unstructured and free-flowing interview process was chosen, usually taking place in the informant's home so as to be as informal as possible, and consequently interviews were frequently long, often involving multiple visits.¹² The two authors conducted most of the interviews.¹³ These typically involved three to four hours of conversation, with some lasting considerably longer (the minimum was around an hour and a half in one or two cases). The interviews were completed between 1998 and 2001 with most of the interviewees aged from their mid-seventies to their mid-nineties at the time of the interview. Wide licence was given to respondents to present their memoirs and stories at length, in order to allow material of relevance to their sexual attitudes

Lesley A. Hall, *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650–1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 248.

¹¹ Little difference in response rate has been found between sex surveys and those on apparently more neutral topics. See, for example, Dare and Cleland, 'Reliability and Validity of Survey Data on Sexual Behaviour', 94, L. R. England, 'Little Kinsey: An Outline of Sex Attitudes in Britain', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1950): 589.

¹² On the advantages of unstructured interviews see Janet Finch, "'It's Great to Have Some-One to Talk to': The Ethics and Politics of Interviewing Women", in *Social Researching: Politics, Problems, Practice*, eds. C. Bell and H. Roberts (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 73, Lee, *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics*, Sue Lees, *Sugar and Spice: Sexuality and Adolescent Girls* (London: Penguin, 1993), 11. The opposing view that 'censored behaviour' is more willingly revealed in 'self-administered questionnaires than in face-to-face interviews' is maintained by B. Laslett and R. Rapoport, 'Collaborative Interviewing and Interactive Research', *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 37, no. 4 (1975): 973–4, Dare and Cleland, 'Reliability and Validity of Survey Data on Sexual Behaviour', 101.

¹³ Those wishing to know the identity of interviewers should examine the interview codes: *srss* in any code refers to interviews conducted by Simon Szreter, who is married and was in his early forties at the time of the interviews, those *kf* by Kate Fisher, who was at the time unmarried, childless and in her late twenties, and those *jm* by James Mark, an oral historian who was at the time unmarried and childless, also in his late twenties. In one case of a joint interview, Betty and Horace *msf/kf/ht/#31*, a first interview was conducted by Kate Fisher and a subsequent one by Simon Szreter. In all other cases, a single interviewer was involved.

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and practices to emerge as much as possible from its proper context as the respondents saw it, and not from the analytical context of the interviewers' agenda.¹⁴ Many interviewees welcomed the chance to reminisce about their lives for as long as they wished and claimed to have enjoyed the experience. The use of unstructured interviews, which gave interviewees some control over the format of the discussion, allowed them to direct the conversation to a considerable extent. Many were surprised that they chose to talk openly about their sex lives but nevertheless did not regret having done so and indeed several, like June (1914), recommended the experience to her friends:

JUNE You are crafty, aren't you, asking all these questions? ... when she [a friend] mentioned it on Monday ... I said ... 'Well, I've enjoyed it.' I says, 'It's been nice talking about.' I just put it like that; it's been nice going back and thinking about the old times. I said, 'You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to answer' (laughs) ... I said, 'Anything personal if you don't want to discuss', I said, 'you don't discuss.' I thought I'd better put her mind at rest. She sounded as though she was a bit – didn't know what you'd ask her. So I just sort of said, 'Well, I'm comfortable [with what] I said and I've enjoyed it.' I said, 'I've enjoyed her company and I've enjoyed going back in time', you see, which is nice.¹⁵

Long, unstructured interviews also minimised the possibility that respondents systematically concealed significant or important aspects of their lives. Although certain sexual experiences might easily be isolated and left unmentioned, many other events were difficult to conceal without creating inconsistencies or anomalies in testimony which could be sensitively probed. Rose (1928) explicitly acknowledged that she had been trying to hide the fact that she had had an affair with the man who was to become her second husband before she invited him to become her lodger, and before her husband asked for a divorce. It was the need to tell a consistent life story which made this concealment unsustainable. The story was revealed with humour and without intrusive questioning:

ROSE And then I met (pause) round ... this pub just down there. This fellow kept sayin' 'Ello, sweet'art'; I mean, I didn't know he were married, so, we started goin' out even tho' I were married. Hmm. Anyway, me ex-husband (pause). Y'know, I'm, I'm scrappin' that part ...

So you left your first husband, because ... ?

¹⁴ See below, next section, for a discussion of the ways in which the agenda of interviewees was likely to have been shaped by contemporary sexual discourses and assumptions about changing sexual behaviour.

¹⁵ June msf/kf/ht/#27. Born 1914, the daughter of a bank manager in Barnsley, in 1936 she married a Liptons-trained grocery manager and lived most of her married life in Brighouse, Yorkshire, where she had two children (and one miscarriage). She did some work for her husband who owned his own grocery business.

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Well, I can't remember whether he left – he must, oh, I know, uh, it's the part I'm tryin' not to tell ya (laughs). He [first husband] were going back t-... his mother or somewhere, and I said, 'Oh, go on then'; so I got a lodger! But we had been a bit friends before that! So when he [first husband] come back, he couldn't move in 'cos there was a lodger in! Ha! So, like I said, 'e's dead now, 'e's the only one that's dead now.

So did, then, did he divorce you for that?

He did, love, yeah...

So, the second husband...

Yeah.

Where did you meet him?

I tell ya, that Turner's pub 'ere, down 'ere; it's all circled round 'ere.

Hmm mm.

'Cos me first husband lived near Montague Street.

And how soon after your first marriage had broken up was it that you met your second husband?

Well, I met 'im before it, actually...

(overlapping) Right, it was...

(overlapping) you know, outside the pub

it was, and he became the lodger.

Yeah.

*(laughs)*¹⁶

The recollection of sensitive, shameful or socially unacceptable experiences was often disclosed as a result of the confiding relationship of trust that was built up. This included, for instance, painful memories of child sex abuse from some interviewees, including Rose.¹⁷ In other cases sexual indiscretions were revealed. Lucy (1907), a weaver and a grocer's wife from Blackburn, almost inadvertently let slip the fact that she had had a brief affair:

LUCY Frank, I mean, he was my first. I always loved Frank. I loved Frank from the very beginning. Sometimes we 'ad a quarrel; we 'ad a row now and then, but still 'e were Frank. I didn't, yeah, but, I'd bin with somebody else – I've not been, yeah – I did go with someone else, during a bit, but anyway, I didn't like him, no, but Frank, there was nobody like Frank, nobody like Frank, no, no.

So when did you go with somebody else?

Well, I did once, twice. I 'ave been, yes, I've bin with someone else, yeah.

Was that before you were married?

No, after I was married, no. Just an odd time; I don't know whether I'd 'ad too much to drink or what, I don't know, but I did go with somebody else, but only once, yes.

And that was after you were married?

¹⁶ Rose msf/kf/bl/#21. One of the poorest interviewees, Rose had a very difficult life: abused as a child, married four times, she had six children and undertook a range of jobs including being a winder in a woollen mill and a dinner lady. See also below, 153–4.

¹⁷ Others recounting first-hand incidents of sexual abuse by adults when they were children were: Reg (1919) msf/kf/ht/#36 and Hubert (1911) msf/kf/ht/#32.

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(overlapping) ... but I didn't want, no, no, but Frank, Frank was mine. Yes, 'e was mine. I'm not grumblin' – I'm not grumblin' about my life, love, no.

So tell me, tell me about this other one, when was that?

Oh, oh, sometime during – it's a long, long while ago, but it were just someone. I must 'ave 'ad a drink, I don't know how it, how it happened but I just went once, once with him and that was all. It was when I was getting older like – I weren't young, but after that I never spoke to him again, no... It was just one of them things, as I slipped up at.

Yes.

I wouldn't do it again.

No.

No. No. Frank were my partner, that were right, yeah.

And did you tell Frank?

Pardon?

Did you tell Frank about it?

No. Oh, no, no, no. 'E'd 'ave gone after him (laughing); 'e'd 'ave murdered him – no 'e'd 'ave murdered me 'n all – no, no, I mean to say, no, but 'e were alright, I, yeah, I miss him though.¹⁸

Dougie (1919), a gardener from Berkhamsted, showed no reluctance in recalling his wartime brothel experiences:

DOUGIE When we were stationed in Brussels I used to go down and see this woman who used to own this little pub, and she was a brothel-owner; she owned two. And while I was going with her, she offered [me] her half, her bankbook if I'd got a divorce and married her.

Really?

Yeah, she'd al-, she was already married. 'Cos the one night when I slept with her, her husband was in the next room and I didn't know that and he come in with a four-legged stool ... then we went, had a week's leave in Brussels and me and me mate went down, round that one, for, see if we could see her and one of the brothel women. She said, 'Don't you come in here, Dougie', she said, 'For God's sake, go!'; she said, 'She's got a revolver round her', she says, 'She'll shoot you if she gets a bloody chance'. So we went out and went into another one (chuckle).

So why did she have it in for you?

Well, I, I'd been in her other brothel, and I'd been upstairs with one of the girls, and that was her sister-in-law kept that one and she had already told her that, what I'd done.

And what had you done?

I'd been upstairs with one of the women who worked there. I, and I didn't know she was her sister-in-law, otherwise I worn't have gone in the bloomin' pub (laugh).

Aah.

Describe what it was like.

Aah, just like an ordinary little pub where you get your drink and then these women come out and sit with you, and buy them a drink; you were soon nearly

¹⁸ Lucy msf/kf/bl/#10.

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broke by the time you bought them drinks, and then paid for going upstairs with them (laugh).¹⁹

Interviews were conducted with both men and women and by male and female interviewers.²⁰ Despite the sociological assertion that men respond ‘best’ to male interviewers and women to female investigators we did not assign interviews according to gender.²¹ This is not to argue that we saw gender as irrelevant to the interview process, but rather that gender differences as well as similarities could be productive.²² Merlin (1908) joked about the difficulties in talking to a young female interviewer about sex and compared this with the respect he was used to showing women. In part, however, this was clearly also an element of the flirtatious rapport that had built up, which contributed to the construction of an extraordinarily detailed and rich life story, while at the same time providing important insights into the ways in which beliefs about gender structured sexual conversations between men and women, including husbands and wives:

MERLIN No, her favourite position – I, I shouldn’t talk to you like this, you’re only a girl!
 (Laugh)
 The, the best way was, was from the back ...
So it seems that there are very different ways in which you would talk to girls and to women than if you were talking to men friends.
 Of course, yeah. Who told you, Judy [an acquaintance of Merlin’s]?
 Yes.
 I’ll, I’ll kill her!

¹⁹ Dougie msf/kf/ht/#5. In contrast it is sometimes assumed that male interviewees will not talk to women about sexual matters let alone ‘risqué sex’ (Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 129). Dougie was one of eight children – the son of a Watford-based bus conductor – and his mother took in washing for extra money. He married in 1941 and had a sequence of low-paid jobs after the war. His wife had two children and also one abortion, which he said he had insisted on, as she acknowledged it was not his child.

²⁰ On questions of gender and the importance of interviewing both men and women see, Caroline Daley, ‘“He Would Know, but I Just Have a Feeling”: Gender and Oral History’, *Women’s History Review* 7 (1998): 343–59, Caroline Gatrell, ‘Interviewing Fathers: Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork’, *Journal of Gender Studies* 15, no. 3 (2006): 237–51.

²¹ See, for example, Ann Cartwright and Joanna Moffett, ‘A Comparison of Results Obtained by Men and Women Interviewers in a Fertility Survey’, *Journal of Biosocial Science* 6, no. 3 (1974), Yow, *Recording Oral History*, Maureen Padfield and Ian Procter, ‘The Effect of Interviewer’s Gender on the Interviewing Process: A Comparative Enquiry’, *Sociology* 30, no. 2 (1996): 355–66.

²² See also, Patrick Branigan, Kirsti Mitchell and Kaye Wellings, ‘Discomfort, Discord and Discontinuity as Data: Using Focus Groups to Research Sensitive Topics’, *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 2, no. 3 (2000): 255–67, on the productive use of mixed-gender focus groups in exploring sexual attitudes and practices. On the complexities of gender and interviewing and the need to look beyond a simplistic focus on the gender of the interviewer and interviewee, see Barbara Pini, ‘Interviewing Men: Gender and the Collection and Interpretation of Qualitative Data’, *Journal of Sociology* 41, no. 2 (2005): 201–16.

[...]
So is the language you use with girls and with men very different?
 Of course, yeah.
So you would swear with men, would you?
 Of course, yeah.
And would you ever swear in front of your wife?
 No. It wasn't the done, the done thing. You wouldn't even say damn. Because, uh, in, in those days things were much different than they are now. You, you respected women more than they do now.²³

Although some were not concerned, all interviewees were of course guaranteed anonymity.

SARAH I should hate – I should hate my daughter to, uh, know that I'd, uh, discussed my private life ... I wouldn't like my daughter – that's what I said, I, that's the main thing ... I've really had, had serious thought, and I thought, 'Oh have I done the right thing?' ... Oh yes, my daughter would hate it. (pause) But on the other hand, she doesn't live in Blackburn, she, she lives and, and they wouldn't be any connection because her name is quite, is different than mine.
Well, your name is not going to be there ...
 I have had quite serious doubts about it and I thought 'Oh dear ...'
Oh, have you? Oh.
 'Have I, have I done the right thing?' Uh, anyway, it's done now isn't it? I don't (chuckle) ...
Well, I mean if you're, you know, if you're seriously doubting then I won't use what you told me because it did – you know, it's got to be up to you.
 (interrupting) Well, you can use excerpts out of it (giggle) but, but, which you probably will, you'll pick what you want out of it, won't you?
But I promise you, everything is completely private, everybody is completely anonymous, everybody has to be for this sort of research ...
 Yes, as long as no names (chuckle).²⁴

What's in it for them?

It was not only through skilled interviewing that informants agreed to reveal details of their private lives. Other factors influenced the decision to break with the convention of remaining silent about marriage and sexuality. In some cases it was the existence of alternative social conventions which prompted detailed and frank disclosure. For instance, many politely and generously simply wished to be helpful and accommodating. As a result it was generally only the bolder

²³ Merlin msf/kf/bl/#35. Married in 1940, he was a Corporation bus and tram driver in Blackburn; his wife died in 1977.
²⁴ Sarah msf/kf/bl/#30, born in 1906, married an upholsterer in 1928 and they lived in Bolton before moving to Blackburn in 1944. She had two live-births in the early 1930s but one child was born with spina bifida and died after ten days.

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and more forthright interviewees who refused to answer certain questions or openly objected to some themes.

Respondents sought to be helpful, then, despite sometimes finding the subject matter difficult. Felicity (1919), the wife of a claims assessor for British Rail, who had lower-middle-class origins (her father had been a grocer who ran a shop and her mother a weaver), got dressed up for the occasion. She was sometimes uncomfortable discussing sex and surprised at the interviewer's interest in the subject. She endeavoured, however, to provide an honest response. When faced with a discussion she was not entirely easy with she did not close the conversation down but answered directly, albeit curtly:

FELICITY Well, I've a bit of make-up on today. Have you noticed? 'Cos you were coming – didn't know who was coming.

(laughs) You did that for me?

Yes, and me hair's going to get done this afternoon. I generally have it done Wednesday but I've done that for you, you see. Having me hair done this afternoon.

[...]

So how important was sex in your, in your marriage?

Well, they do say it's the most important and the least important thing. And I think that's pretty accurate.

Right. What do you mean by that?

Well, if you haven't got it I think you need it to keep your man together in some way. But it's not absolutely – shouldn't be the focus – it shouldn't be the whole being of your life.

Um-hmm. So you said you had – you talked to other women who said that they didn't enjoy sex as much as the men...

Very difficult to talk about. Is it going to – there's going to be a lot of sex in your book, isn't there? Well, that's all you've asked me today: sex, sex, sex.

[...]

And did you always do the same things or did you have an adventurous sex life?

Pass.

And how of-, how long did sex last?

I didn't have me watch on. *(laughs)* Well, I suppose it was average; don't know.

Did you ever feel dissatisfied with sex?

... I don't think so.

And did it change after you had children?

No.

Was it difficult to find time to have sex after the children?

Sometimes.

Did you wait until they were in bed?

Oh yes. What else can you do?

And did you ever talk about sex with your husband?

Not a lot.²⁵

²⁵ Felicity msf/kf/bl/#37.