

PhD Pioneers: The Living Experiences of The Open University's First PhD Graduates

Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee: **Dr Joan Whitehead**

Interviewed by: **Elizabeth Currie**

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Clip 2

[00:17:32-00:19:57]

Well I don't think I changed the world. I think I did make a contribution, and certainly the questionnaire I designed to measure intrinsic and extrinsic motivation I have used subsequently, and other researchers have used it, and it's turned out to be very robust. And I think the emphasis on intrinsic motivation that my study helped to build on I think was important, and certainly not long after finishing my PhD I got a significant grant from the Leverhulme Trust to look at gender and educational achievement. And intrinsic motivation is key in that area in determining achievement, both of girls and boys. And I think that that was significant, and in fact it was only probably about three or four years ago that I got an email from someone saying could they please use my questionnaire. Even though it was designed in 1977, 1979, and I know that it is still very robust, and it does measure genuine differences in motivation, which are important.

And I did the analysis for girls and boys separately, but the intrinsic motivation factor was particularly important for girls. It was what made girls transcend, and I'm going back now to the 80s, late 70s, 80s, to transcend the very strong stereotype that girls, academic girls were not acceptable, not socially acceptable. And therefore the fact that they enjoyed it, and they were curious about intellectual things was what carried them through not conforming to gender stereotypes, and therefore it was significant in that respect. And certainly for boys, I mean one of the things that I did, again the intrinsic motivation was important for boys, I mean although boys tended to be also extrinsically motivated. They wanted high status jobs, they wanted high earning jobs, but if they weren't intrinsically motivated then that wasn't enough to help them to be successful at school.

So yes, it was important, and I think it's become increasingly recognised, and I made a small contribution to that I think.