1. Date Transcribed: 19th May 2021
2. Interviewer(s): Cathy

Respondent(s): David

| 00:00:00 | RES Good to go at this end as well. |
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| **00:00:04** | **INT That’s lovely, so David what kind of researcher are you?** |
| 00:00:10 | RES I guess I would call myself a qualitative researcher, but really, I technically have more experience with mixed methods research, when I look back at it. |
| **00:00:24** | **INT So, when would you, when did that change take place from you know mixed methods to that qualitative identity?** |
| 00:00:38 | RES I don’t know, I mean in my under-graduate - so I did some research projects as an under-graduate and those were mostly quantitative. And then for my PhD I really got into qualitative methods, and kind of that’s where I kind of got really excited by them. Really just because that was the kind of right fit for what I was interested in looking at. But that research topic was chosen based on a quantitative research project previously. And I think it was one of those classic things where you do a kind of quantative piece of research, and it was a very small one, and it just asks you a question, the data is just odd, and you just kind of want to make sense of it, and the statistics don’t give you any sense of what’s really going on. So the kind of follow-on from that was obviously going to be kind of qualitative based. So then I kind of moved into qualitative research for my PhD, and that kind of, in terms of identity that’s kind of what I kind of loved and really enjoyed, the richness of. |
| **00:01:51** | **INT Yes, so what was the research about?** |
| 00:01:55 | RES So the research was looking at HIV/AIDS, quite a while ago now, and so the research was looking at kind of, initially kind of what factors were kind of describing the spread, influencing the spread. But then I became kind of more interested in, this was the kind of qualitative side of it, as to kind of what was helping people who had HIV/AIDS. And this kind of notion of peer-support and self-support which I was really interested in exploring, what that meant really in this context. Yes, so that was the gist of the project. |
| **00:02:40** | **INT And had you already decided, at that point had you already decided that it was going to be qualitative and not mixed methods?** |
| 00:02:50 | RES Yes I think so because I think it’s one of those things where, the classic thing where, especially in the first year of your PhD, the research question changes a little bit. But the focus was always going to be something that was going to be too difficult to answer in any kind of quantitative way. So it was much more of a kind of exploratory kind of theory building I think, yes. |
| **00:03:15** | **INT And your Supervisors, what was their you know attitude to that?** |
| 00:03:23 | RES So that was, that was kind of fine, I think it’s one of those things where, again quite a classic PhD thing I think, I think I had one Supervisor who, they’d both done qualitative stuff before but one Supervisor had done mostly qualitative, one had done mostly quantitative, so I think, you know I always remember those supervision meetings, and I’ve had lots of people with similar stories, where you know one Supervisor’s like, Yes’. I never had the classic, ‘Your sample size is too small’, but it was definitely kind of explaining the approach and having very different questions because they had different backgrounds. But yes, for my Supervisors that was never really a kind of bone of contention really because I think they’d both done qualitative research and they both kind of understood where it fit, that it fit well with these research questions, so. |
| **00:04:22** | **INT Do you mind telling me what your sample size was, if you can remember?** |
| 00:04:28 | RES Yes I can’t, but the thing is it was, it was a project that had kind of multiple different things, so there was, there were diaries and focus groups and there were semi-structured interviews, and there were semi-structured interviews with kind of like people who were you know at Government level or kind of a Service provider level, or Service user level so, it ended up being kind of talking to quite a lot of people, but yes definitely kind of like a couple of dozen or something like that rather than hundreds or anything. |
| **00:05:02** | **INT Right yes, so talking about the data gathering there, can you tell me a bit more about that, how you gathered your data and the forms that it took and any, things that you remember that were difficult or easy?** |
| 00:05:19 | RES Yes I mean the thing about that project was, I mean for the different people that I wanted to talk to there were kind of different challenges I guess. So the first thing was kind of the classic kind of gaining access, so talking to Government, people in Government Institutions and so on and so forth, getting kind of the official line and that kind of thing. So that was a classic kind of, yes trying to, you have to have your kind of letter of recommendation and kind of gaining access and approval in the kind, in the bureaucracy.And then also, but then a very different challenge gaining access to kind of on the ground Service providers, so charities and Service users, because then there’s a kind of, it’s the same kind of issue with trust I guess but with a very different focus because they’re kind of protecting their own kind of personal privacy rather than the kind of privacy of the organisation and the Government.And then obviously - |
| **00:06:25** | **INT Were you co-located, in terms of was it the UK or ?** |
| 00:06:31 | RES No so this was in Africa, yes. Yes and then I think the other thing that was a challenge was obviously it being particularly about HIV/AIDS and the stigma about having it. And one of the things that kind of became difficult writing up was the necessity when data collecting, you know in your head you’re like, ‘Oh I’ll speak to people who kind of have HIV/AIDS’, but it ended up being, people didn’t want to kind of formally describe themselves in that way, which was fine, so it was people who were affected in some way. What that meant was kind of either that they have HIV/AIDS themselves or they were caring and looking after for people who did. And making that distinction was very important to getting anyone really, to engage with the project kind of initially.And in the end because of the focus of the project kind of on support rather than, it wasn’t kind of like, ‘Oh what’s it like to live with HIV/AIDS’ kind of thing but looking at support systems. People could talk about those personally or in the abstract as kind of their experience, and then that made things a lot easier I think. |
| **00:07:52** | **INT Can you remember how long it took you to kind of get to the point of actually being able to access people, to talk to you?** |
| 00:08:05 | RES No I don’t remember. I think there was a lot of kind of, yes doing a bit of a dance, like learning to trust people, and also just kind of finding that kind of initial sampling kind of issue about kind of finding, for something like this, kind of the organisations and getting trust with those kind of organisations that you want to work with. And again we’re talking a kind of like, yes kind of like pre-smartphone kind of days so, and not finding, contacting through the internet and email and stuff like that. So it was very much kind of like phonebook access initially. So, but then also kind of, so yes through contacts that would help and suggest. And then eventually that kind of becomes a snowballing kind of thing, you get to talk to one organisation and then they kind of recommend or you hear about other ones, so. |
| **00:09:17** | **INT So when you’re doing your research nowadays, I don’t know if you describe yourself as doing research now, would you?** |
| 00:09:30 | RES No, no it’s been a while now, yes.  |
| **00:09:34** | **INT Okay, but if you were to be gathering data and analysing it and so on, what kinds of things do you think you have learnt about that since you first started doing research?** |
| 00:09:56 | RES About gathering and analysing data? |
| **00:10:00** | **INT Or the entire process, yes, we tend to start with gathering definitely. What’s changed? How have you changed since you first set out as a researcher?** |
| 00:10:14 | RES I mean I think it’s definitely confidence, I mean after you’ve done something the first time you’re kind of like, ‘Oh I can do this’, even if you don’t think you did it very well. Usually, I hope I’ve been kind of reflective enough to find areas where, yes I’ve learnt things and, yes I mean I can think of dozens of them where, yes made mistakes and then kind of learnt from them, got better as a result of that. |
| **00:10:39** | **INT Yes, can you give me some examples?** |
| 00:10:42 | RES I think just kind of how to contact people, how to get in touch, I think I’ve got better at that. I think in terms of kind of facilitating interviews, it was one of those things that just doing dozens of them just really helped, just get your mind in. And then also kind of, yes writing up as well. I think my kind of writing up research projects has got a lot more realistic and a bit more grounded. I think in my PhD days it was like, ‘Oh I’m going to create some new radical social theory that will change the World’. And now I think it’s a little bit more realistic, like, ‘Yes, this research could you know contribute a minor point to this’, and so on and so forth. And being better at kind of communicating that and connecting it to the data I think as well.Yes, and I think presenting data as well. |
| **00:11:39** | **INT And is that about how you, is that how you think or there are some practical things that you** do **that mean that you’re thinking is demonstrated better, are there tangible things?** |
| 00:12:00 | RES Yes, I’m not sure really. I think it’s a bit of both. I think it’s kind of that my thinking on those things has improved so it’s created better tangible outputs, if that makes any sense. |
| **00:12:22** | **INT Yes, does make sense to me, and so what kind of outputs are we talking about?** |
| 00:12:31 | RES So yes, I mean mostly kind of writing research papers and stuff like that, and I think that’s one of the things that I was very, yes I’m very grateful to have, learning by kind of writing with Supervisors and so on when I was involved in other projects and stuff like that. So I think it’s definitely, yes the writing research papers is something that I don’t think I’ve ever been particularly good at, but definitely got better kind of as I co-wrote papers with other people, yes for sure. That would be a good example I think of a tangible output I guess. |
| **00:13:10** | **INT Is that because you’re seeing it modelled, or actually is it part of just you being more reflexive?** |
| 00:13:19 | RES I think it is about being more reflexive about seeing how, how kind of I’ve changed in that time, yes. |
| **00:13:36** | **INT So if there was one thing that you could say I’d definitely do this differently now to when I first started out, what would that be?** |
| 00:13:58 | RES I think it would be, I think it would be confidence in the data gathering. I think I had a lot of anxiety and concerns about you know like confidentiality and ethics, and that things would go well and that I’d get good data, and I wouldn’t upset participants. And I think I feel a lot more confident now having done a lot more data collection, that I understand how to do it in a good and safe and ethical way. Making sure that there’s good data and it’s collected in the right way and kind of everyone’s happy with their part in the process. I think I was very conscious, I was very conscious at the beginning, I think I kind of still am about being a good researcher and kind of like the - I mean you hear a lot of people who are involved in research projects and they never want to get involved with another research project because they’ve never seen any of the outcomes from it, it doesn’t help them at all, you know it’s a bit of a kind of like just kind of data-grab exercise. And so I’ve been, I think I got, I think I got better at kind of yes trying to make sure that the research is right for everyone. So the researchers and the people commissioning the research, and also the people taking part I think as well. |
| **00:15:31** | **INT Is there, can you give me an example of how you do that?** |
| 00:15:38 | RES The funniest example that I had was actually, I now always send thank-you cards to participants after they’ve been in an interview, just as a kind of formal acknowledgement of like, Thanks for taking part. And because there’s a thing, yes you know, you send them transcripts and maybe, and I just found that like most people, either they don’t really want to read it, they don’t have the time or they’re very interested in reading it. So it doesn’t really kind of do anything for everyone. And you send them the research outputs at the end of it and then depending on who you’re talking to and what the research is about it’s like, well yes ‘this is an Academic written article. It may not be of any interest in use to you but hey, thanks for helping out with the data.’But just a pretty thank-you card, just at the end of the process, yes people responded really well to that. And it was just one of those things, in a very British kind of cultural way, that kind of yes was, yes was a formal acknowledgement of them taking part. And of course, there’s renumeration and all those kinds of things as well, but sometimes I think it’s just saying thank-you and I don’t think I was very good at that to start, and I think I got better at that I think, so yes. |
| **00:17:09** | **INT I tend to think that that’s a really good way of signalling that actually you don’t have to keep doing this ping-pong, you don’t need, some people need a clear signal of when the project is finished. I think that - and that might be from a researcher perspective or a participant perspective, ‘Are we still doing this or..’?** |
| 00:17:33 | RES Yes. |
| **00:17:34** | **INT So are there any particular parts of the research process, and I’ll let you think about what you mean by research process, but are there any particular parts that you really enjoy, that you might describe as your favourite?** |
| 00:17:57 | RES Definitely not writing up, I think I’m very bad at that, I’m not very good at writing. I don’t know, it’s a really good question, it’s really interesting because I think you can get really excited about, I get really excited about planning, like planning it out and I’m going to speak to this many people and here are the questions and things like that. Because one of those things where you’re kind of excited for the project, you’re excited for the questions, you’re excited for the opportunity to start to talk to people, and you haven’t quite hit the awkward reality of the real world now. When you’re like people not turning up, and phones and recorders not working, and not being able to find anyone that you want to speak to, yada, yada, yada.I’ve always enjoyed, I think the other part of the process that I really kind of look forward to is that moment where you just, for the first time you’ve got if not all the data together but like a good chunk of it. And then you can start to sit down and read it. I mean it’s always exciting, you know you do an interview or a focus group or you get a diary back or whatever, and ‘Ooh, like exciting things to look at’. And it’s really exciting to do that and I’m always like, Yes I’ll read it straightaway or listen to it straightaway. But there’s a sense of kind of more excitement when there’s a slightly bigger picture, because you’ve got a bunch of respondents back and I think that’s probably the bit that I kind of most look forward to I think. Yes I’d probably say that, yes. |
| **00: 19:35** | **INT Would you just, you said it’s a moment, and do you experience it as a single like flash of moment, or is it a more extended kind of joy?** |
| 00:19:49 | RES It’s a good point I think it is extended because again it depends kind of how you’re structuring research. So I’ve done ones where, especially if you’re doing kind of like, you know the more kind of grounded theory thing and you’re kind of analysing and recruiting new participants as you go. There’s not that kind of like end point. But I think for me, yes it’s a point kind of at the beginning – middle of the research where you’ve spoken to a couple of people, you’ve got data back or transcript back from a couple of people at least, like three or four. And then you’re just starting to think, because you know like the first interview might be terrible, or the second interview might be terrible or something. But when you’ve got a couple of good ones in you’re starting to be like, ‘Ah right, they’re both talking about that’, or you know the first kind of inkling that there’s a theme there. There might be a theme to uncover. |
| **00:20:45** | **INT Not just some random ramblings.** |
| 00:20:47 | RES Yes exactly yes, yes something that’s, connects I think. Yes so I think to make those connections I guess yes. But yes definitely extended moment, because obviously yes, usually kind of more transcripts come in and you’re kind of adding to that, yes. |
| **00:21:08** | **INT So do you teach qualitative research methods now David?** |
| 00:21:15 | RES Yes, yes I do. |
| **00:21:21** | **INT Tell me about that.** |
| 00:21:24 | RES So I’m not at a University any more, most of the teaching I do is kind of, yes so I run workshops, I’m invited to do workshops at conferences and things like that, so they tend to be kind of like one-off things like that. And then also writing, like writing the blog and doing video tutorials for YouTube and stuff like that, so it’s kind of very. It’s a weird kind of teaching because it’s not like University teaching at all, I don’t have kind of like formal students, and I don’t do it kind of on a regular basis, it tends to be quite ad-hoc, yes. |
| **00:22:07** | **INT And so what kind of aspects of qualitative research do you teach?** |
| 00:22:15 | RES So I’m kind of, I’m kind of interested in teaching the kind of process side of those things. What’s been interesting for me is the things- I try and teach, I try and write about the things that I could never find a reference for when I was writing up papers. So it’s the bits of the process that are either boring or no one really talks about that you can’t find a reference for. So I guess things like, so we do semi-structured interviews, fine. What is a semi-structured interview look like? Like how long is it? What’s the format of it? So it’s those, I try to focus on those kind of, the practical aspects of the research. I’m not, I’ve never been very kind of interested in kind of like the high-theory kind of level of things. On the epistemology and ontology and that kind of thing because, because I mean I think it’s very important and it’s interesting to me, but it’s not interesting to teach, because I think other people already teach it very well and I think it’s already written about, not always very well but it’s certainly written about, so if you want to reference that you can. But so, but sometimes those, it’s those kind of like the mundane details, and like I think some of the things that get under-reported in journal articles particularly because they’re not interested in it, so I had this big thing about sampling and recruitment and how they’re very different things. But that it’s a very important thing to be clear about how that happens, how that worked and how it didn’t work. You never get any details of that, they’re like, ‘Yes we wanted to speak to you know twelve people who you know like croissants and live in this area and have green-dyed hair, and we found them’. And it’s like, yes ‘Wait, that was not that easy., there’s a story there that’s not being told. And it’s actually very important because who do you not get to speak to? How did you find those people? Is that, are the people you found like weird because they spoke to you about this kind of thing? And like there’s a whole series of things like that I think, it’s very difficult to find references on, very difficult to find descriptions about how to do it well. And very difficult to find examples in the published literature because a journal article, even a very well written one, I think usually because of the editorial constraints or the time limitations, those kind of things are just skimmed over. But for me those are really interesting issues because how you find the people you’re talking to, and who those people end up being, really, really affects what your findings are going to be. It’s kind of a reflexive part of the reflexive process, but it’s not about you it’s about the process in that respect I guess. |
| **00:25:30** | **INT I’m glad you said that because I was going to ask you why you thought it was important, because it’s one thing for something to be interesting but it’s why do you think it’s important? Do you want to say a bit more about that, why you think it’s important?** |
| 00:25:44 | RES I guess the, I don’t have a very kind of positivistic outlook but it’s one of those criticisms of qualitative research is like, ‘Oh yes you only spoke to six people. How do you know that those six people are representative?’ And I think, there’s a feeling that that’s more important when it’s a very small sample size. And to a certain extent I think it is because you know, if you’re speaking to six people about how much they like croissants and you recruited them all from the same bakery, then you’re going to get very different answers to if you recruited them from, all from a different bakery where you know I don’t know they only have, it’s a really stupid example, sorry; only sell chocolate croissants. So somebody’s like, “I love croissants”. People love croissants because they’re sweet. Well you just recruited them from a bakery that only sells chocolate croissants. This other bakery has like cheese and ham croissants, and there they say, “Oh I like croissants because they’re savoury”. So that’s just one of those things that, some kind of understanding of the context of how the sampling worked for the reader is very important for me to understand, whose voices are being represented in the research I think, yes. |
| **00:27:08** | **INT The, so with the teaching what do you most enjoy about it?** |
| 00:27:20 | RES I guess, I think it’s feedback to a certain extent, or some kind of indication of engagement because I don’t have, like I don’t run a module, I don’t run a class so I don’t ever have like a cohort. I mean I have cohorts when I do workshops and things like that, but they’re kind of one-off and they’re quite tangible. So the kind of feedback, what people say was good you know, people email and say thank-you afterwards. Or if they’ve got comments and suggestions. I think that’s the thing that I find most, because I’ve never really done a lot of teaching, like I wouldn’t class myself as being an educator in any way. And it’s one of those things where I’m just, I feel like very amateurish at it because I’ve never really had kind of formal training in teaching. Like I know a lot of Universities don’t do a lot of that, probably quite as much as they should, but there are formal training programmes to a limited extent. And you get a lot of experience, and you get a lot of feedback when you’re doing it year after year, and I’ve never had that. Like the jobs that I’ve had kind of at Universities were always as like full-time - like research posts they never had a teaching component to them. So it’s weird now that I do more teaching than I do research. I find that really weird in terms of how my career’s gone. |
| **00:28:52** | **INT So the, with that kind of lack of - so there’s a few questions, that kind of identity. So let’s go for the formal identity, you found it weird. Is that because it’s kind of impacting on your identity as a researcher, or is it something else?** |
| 00:29:17 | RES I don’t know, I mean it feels weird to me but it’s probably not weird in terms of people from an academic background in general, because I think in Universities most people like juggle research and teaching, and they may have a preference for doing one or the other. But like the posts I had, like I never really had a choice, and I still kind of, my identity I really kind of think of myself more as a researcher even though nowadays at the moment I spend more time doing teaching. That kind of wasn’t really intentional, it wasn’t, that wasn’t like a career change that I was seeking. So in my head it’s weird, I still probably think of myself more as a researcher. But I’ve not done any research now for a couple of years. Although I have done teaching. So yes, I’ve not reflected on that but yes, yes. I’ve got a false sense of identity. |
| **00:30:20** | **INT So when people ask you know, “So what do you do? What are you?”** |
| 00:30:27 | RES Yes I guess I wouldn’t, I would ordinarily have said, “Oh I do qualitative research”, but I guess that doesn’t really apply now, so yes. |
| **00:030:36** | **INT So no one’s asked you that question in a while then?** |
| 00:30:39 | RES No. No. The classic kind of dinner party, ‘Oh what do you do then?’ And I think it’s one of those things where actually what I do is so boring no one actually really wanted to know the answer, so yes, anyway. Or specific or nuanced enough. Unless it’s a bunch of other researchers or whatever, so yes.Hello. I can’t hear you. I can’t hear you. [*Typing noise*]. |
| **00:32:11** | **INT Hang on, can you hear me now?** |
| 00:32:12 | RES Yes, yes you’re back, you’re back. |
| **00:32:17** | **INT Does it didn’t sound any different to you?** |
| 00:32:20 | RES Yes it sounds different. |
| **00:32:0026** | **INT Something’s a problem [*unintelligible*] there, oh dear.** |
| 00:32:31 | RES Yes it’s definitely not as good now but I can still hear you. |
| **00:32:37** | **INT That’s interesting, I’ll have to check that out late , I can’t hear you as well as I did. Right let’s get back to the interview.** |
| 00:32:49 | RES Yes. |
| **00:32:53** | **INT We were talking about dinner parties, and what you say to people, I suppose I was also interested in that, because people ask [ unclear 00:33:08} and can you mention in a sentence on what you would put on an insurance form, and you have a choice of researcher and teacher, which one would you pick?** |
| 00:33:26 | RES I mean I’ve never found anything that’s the right, that’s even remotely close. Yes I would generally go for researcher because it feels like vague enough to kind of, to be a, that it might actually be a category to look for. But yes, again you’re giving me existential doubt now, because yes, you’re right, I would identify as a researcher but I’m somebody who’s not done research in quite a long time now. |
| **00:34:02** | **INT I think, I’m sure friends will [unclear 00:34:09]. With teaching what do you find challenging, what do you enjoy, what do you find particularly challenging?** |
| 00:34:33 | RES I think I find the planning and the prep challenging because I think I’m a bit of a procrastinator so I never want to do it. It’s just kind of getting the slides together and planning the time and planning the bits and pieces I think. Probably because I’m lazy, more than anything else. |
| **00:34:56** | **INT Says the man who loves to [*unintelligible]***  |
| 00:34:55 | RES Sorry? |
| **00:34:57** | **INT Says the man who loves to [*unclear* plan his research]**  |
| 00: 34:59 | RES Sorry I can’t hear you. |
| **00:35:01** | **INT Oh its’ off. Says the man who likes to plan his research and gets [unclear 00:35:06]** |
| 00:35:06 | RES Yes, yes I think, yes I think the things is like I like planning for a process but teaching feels like planning for a performance. I don’t really like the performative aspect of it, so I don’t really like planning for that I guess. |
| **00:35:33** | **INT In terms of, I suppose in terms of research interviews, are they not performances?** |
| 00:35:41 | RES Yes absolutely, yes absolutely. But where I’m not the prime performer. Like I am kind of performing that I’m facilitating it, but you’re really kind of like facilitating someone else. I mean they’re the kind of like you know starring lead. You’re just there for them to give them someone to talk to. You know it’s like one of those movies where they’ve got a sidekick who’s basically just there to ask questions so they can explain the plot. So I never feel like a lot of performance anxiety if I’m doing research interviews because I guess most of that performance is from the participant, yes. |
| **00:36:28** | **INT So what do you think is challenging about [*unintelligible*]** |
| 00:36:37 | RES Sorry I couldn’t, can you sorry, can you say that again? |
| **00:36:41** | **INT Participants in your workshops, what do they [unclear 00:36:49] find difficult?** |
| 00:36:51 | RES I think it depends a lot on, like you see so much variety depending what their background has been, you know if they’ve, and their discipline. You know if they’ve done qualitative stuff before, if they’ve quantative stuff before. I think I find a lot of the students, at least at the kind of level that I usually talk to, they’re usually quite anxious about not having a set formula for, it not being clear what’s the best method or how many people to talk to, or what’s the best, in epistemology, what’s the best ontology? And it’s like, ‘Well there’s not a right answer to that, you’ve got to discover that for yourself’.And then, you know even whe n you’re getting to do it there isn’t a best way to do an interview or a focus group. And that, it just depends, and getting students, because I think a lot of the time students don’t feel that they’ve got the time or the mental energy to understand everything well enough to make those decisions for themselves. But I think it’s partly about encouraging, for me it’s about encouraging them to understand that it does matter and it doesn’t. Like it is important to have some idea but not to feel that you’re an expert in anything. And just get to the stage where you experiment, you try things and you can learn that way as well. Because I think that’s, yes I think a lot of students want a text book that tells them how to do the research rather than a text book that says, ‘Now just go out and play and learn how to do it by yourself’. I think obviously some people relish that kind of thing but I think quite a lot of students, especially at the kind of Masters level where I see a lot of people, and they don’t have a lot of time to spend on research projects so they just want to get on with it I think.So yes it’s just, I think the challenge is getting people to that understanding that it’s okay for things to go wrong, and it’s okay to learn from that and just try different things and just keep going. |
| **00:39:06** | **INT And do you use stories to help them with that? Do you use [*unclear* your own experience 00:39:12] your experience?** |
| 00:39:15 | RES Yes, yes I try and do that a lot because obviously that engages with people a lot more, and I try and tell stories about things that I’ve done wrong, or went horribly wrong because I think that, yes sometimes it just wakes people up. But it’s just a way to engage with, I mean people just engage with stories and human interest things. And I think they’ll remember those things better. And from my personal point of view it’s like, ‘Well yes I made that horrible mistake but if I tell it as a funny story you’re going to remember it, and at least someone wont have so suffer the same damn thing’. |
| **00:39:52** | **INT On that, is there [*unintelligible*]?** |
| 00:39:56 | RES Sorry? |
| **00:39:57** | **INT Is there one you have in mind at the moment, that you can share?** |
| 00:40:02 | RES I mean there are loads, don’t get me wrong, but there was one that there was a bit of a Twitter discussion going on actually quite recently about, and I just shared a story where I was doing an interview at someone’s house and always I have like my Dictaphone, I actually have a back-up Dictaphone and then batteries, and spare batteries. But on this day I’d forgotten my spare batteries because I think they were in a different bag or something, and then obviously half-way through the interview the batteries ran out on the Dictaphone. And I was like, “Oh God I’m really sorry, I’m really sorry”. And ended up having to steal some batteries from the remote control from their TV so that I could get the Dictaphone running again for the end of the interview. Yes, and then sending them money in the post for a new set of batteries, and all that kind of thing. Because it looks, it looked super-unprofessional. And it was one of those things that also kind of, yes it kind of like jumped over the professional boundaries of like rooting through someone’s house looking for a pair of AAA batteries. And also just the embarrassment of having to kind of pay them back for that as well. I mean they were great about it, they thought it was hilarious. But yes. It was actually one of those things where I risked not being able to collect any more data, so it was one of those things that’s. The teaching methods is just like ‘be prepared’, but that’s the teachable moment. But yes. |
| **00:41:47** | **INT What do you think you would you have done had they not been able to find some batteries?** |
| 00:41:52 | RES I was just frantically just writing notes until they were like, “Are you sure we shouldn’t go and find some batteries?” And I was like, “That’s probably a good idea”. So I would have taken notes and I’ve got, again it’s one of those things that I’ve got really good at, listening and writing and thinking at the same time. Just from doing loads of interviews. Because I always take notes anyway because it just helps me think. But obviously you don’t get the same nuance, and I’m really interested in that nuance of the recorded interview, when you’re just kind of writing you own kind of notes and summaries. And especially when all the other interviews have been transcribed it’s really awkward when you’ve got one that’s just based on your notes, yes. |
| **00:42:42** | **INT Is there any story that you’re prepared to share now [unclear 00:42:55] that you wouldn’t dream of telling students face-to-face?** |
| 00:43:18 | RES I think, I think like a lot of the stories, I don’t really have a specific one, but there are a lot of stories about the research process where from a professional point of view, like I did things that were probably like a bit unsafe nowadays. Like yes, doing interviews in people’s homes and people not knowing if I was there. And like, just things that, like on the way to interviews or back from interviews like picking up hitchhikers and things. Which, and I was like ‘yeah, yeah whatever’, but then you’re like, ‘Technically I was kind of on company time and if something had gone wrong would it have been who’s responsible for that?’ Yes, I don’t know so, yes probably things about the situations that all went fine but looking back you wouldn’t recommend students to kind of do things in that way because they might be unsafe and they might put people at risk I guess, participants or the researcher themselves. |
| **00:44:34** | **INT And is that all you trying to keep them safe.**  |
| 00:44:37 | RES Yes I think so, yes I think so, yes. |
| **00:44:44** | **INT Just tell me a bit more about the stories, do you have any like cautionary tales?** |
| 00:44:53 | RES Cautionary tales? |
| **00:44:55** | **INT Cautionary tales? Something like somebody did this or I did this, you know, I know you said about how to avoid these things, but are there any that you do to signal [unclear 00:45:16] a note of caution.** |
| 00:45:20 | RES Yes, I sometimes have cautionary tales about like doing interviews with, I don’t know how you’d describe it, but like important people like Heads of Institutions and people running Services and stuff like that, and CEOs and Directors and what not. And being aware that sometimes these people are actually very savvy speakers. They may even be used to being interviewed, which may not be the case for a lot of your other participants, and how good they can be at flowing the conversation to their advantage. So they let themselves say things, which then again may not be entirely true as well but are about how they want themselves to want to be perceived. And just being ready to, yes to, with some of these people, and it can be anyone, I mean you can talk to any kind of participants that’s just able to kind of like be very, very charming and charismatic and kind of like, and convince you of something that as soon as you start to look at it, you’re like, ‘Yes that’s patently not true’. And I think that’s one of the things we, because a lot of people will do research with participants where they’re kind of like lay-participants, I know but not important, in important places and so we’re looking at those people to just, because they’re just describing their own lives in ways that they may not have a particular ulterior motive about how they present themselves. I mean everybody has a bit of a way that they like to see themselves presented. But then speaking to professionals who are kind of professional at presenting themselves in a certain light. And then being able to kind of, how you interpret and analyse that data, and how you kind of make use of the subtext and the fact that you may not have asked particular piercing follow-on questions because at the time you were just kind of like charmed by how amicable they were being towards you. And that these kinds of people are very good and very professional at doing that kind of thing. Not a specific story there for obvious reasons, but yes I think, yes that’s one of the cautionary tales I have I think. |
| **00:48:06** | **INT Yes it’s about the [unclear 00:48:07] isn’t it, so yes. That is helpful. If you were to look back your younger self, if you look back at your beginning, a neophyte researcher-self, what piece of advice would you give to them about research?** |
| 00:48:38 | RES I think when I started out as a researcher I kind of had a sense of me being like, yes young and smart and going to like, smarter than everyone else, and going to change the World through my research. And I think what I learnt is the importance of kind of collaboration and working with other people and the things that I learnt from them. And that attitude kind of like changed really quickly I think. That would be the main thing I think, I think I would say just yes, keep your own ego in check I think, for me anyway. And just, I’m so grateful for the stuff that I’ve learnt from the people who were, like my supervisors and PI’s on projects where I was a researcher and all the collaborators and stuff like that. And the participants, stuff I’ve learnt from participants as well. And that it’s it was just like this constant journey of learning I think from everyone else, it wasn’t, and sometimes I went in with quite a kind of like, ‘I will change things’ rather than ‘those things would change me’ attitude. And I think my advice to myself would be more open to those things early on because those are the things that are kind of going to be the most value I think. |
| **00:50:01** | **INT Thank you. We’re reaching the end of our time, but is there anything that you would particularly keen to say to me about how people** [unclear 00:50:20} **with this piece of work?** |
| 00:50:23 | RES I don’t know I guess the only thing that I was kind of reflecting on as I was thinking about doing this interview is how I had that identity after I finished my PhD about, I want to be a qualitative researcher and I do want to do qualitative research. And then it became, it became a little bit of a thing about having to pay the bills and having to find jobs, and so I ended up doing, like I was a research fellow and so on like, what we’re actually kind of mostly mixed-methods projects for a while because there just weren’t very many like jobs, like paid jobs, full-time paid jobs with prospects and whatever available on pure qualitative research projects. And I don’t know how much that’s changed now, it’s probably pretty similar, I mean I know it’s really difficult to get jobs in Academia, especially right now anyway. But I was kind of lucky to have had that statistical background and training to put on my CV as well because I think realistically that got me a lot of jobs that ended up allowing me to do qualitative research as well that I wouldn’t have been able to do otherwise. And it’s interesting to me how much I had to become a mixed-methods researcher for the job market if that makes sense. Not that those weren’t like great projects to be involved with, and that the mixed-method components of it weren’t totally justified and a good part of the design. But there was always a bit like, ‘Ah I want to do the qualitative stuff’. But having to do the quant-mixed-method stuff as well, yes I think that was the only other thing that I was reflecting on before this. |
| **00:52:18** | **INT So I suppose that you do, you know is that just a reflection on this World or is it your own sense of identity?** |
| 00:52:30 | RES Yes I think it’s a bit of both of those, I mean I think, I mean I hear from a lot of students who want, who just want to do more and more qualitative work and I totally get that. And just that the, at least when I was trying to join the Academic job market that that was, that became very limiting and after a period of time it’s like, ‘Well I should take this really good job even though it’s not pure qualitative research’, because I guess, yes at that time, so being a researcher like contributing research to the World and society was more important than a particular method. Which looking back on it is like, that’s yes, that’s pragmatic and that’s good, it’s just a bit odd to just, to have your identity just around one particular method. But I think, I did have that sense that qualitative research is kind of considered the underdog sometimes, and I kind of like fighting the underdog position I guess a bit. And trying to kind of change that status quo. And trying to want to do that a bit, but then. And I’m able to do that now I think and I’m lucky for that but yes, I hear from other people that it’s difficult to find qualitative research jobs. And you can see in general, you know there’s all this money for funding for STEM research and doing, yes statistical training and stuff like that, and yes how much more you can earn in Academia if you’ve got a stats background, and all this kind of thing. So I guess it’s probably, probably the same if you’re trying to enter Academia now but, yes. |
| **00:54:14** | **INT Now I’m going to have, what I thought I might do is just make sure that the records are, part of the record, [*unintelligible*** [s/l 00:54:31] **] you can choose your pseudonym.** |
| 00:54:49 | RES I don’t know, everybody calls me David by mistake so I should probably be David. |
| **00:54:54** | **INT Yes okay, I’m just trying to** [***unintelligible*** [s/l 00:54:58] **and think, ‘Oh my God why did I start doing this now?’ It’s your surname that I tend to get wrong, so David’s - okay. So** **I think I’m just describe the nature of the institution where you work please.** |
| 00:55:21 | RES Well that’s like private really I guess is how I’d describe it. |
| **00:55:259** | **INT I’ve got your email. How would you like to describe your gender?** |
| 00:55:31 | RES Male. |
| **00:55:36** | **INT And do you have a preference on pronoun usage?** |
| 00:55:39 | RES Sorry can you say that again. |
| **00:55:41** | **INT Do you have a preference on pronoun usage ‘him, he, they’?** |
| 00:55:47 | RES Usually he yes. |
| **00:55:51** | **INT And disciplinary field?** |
| 00:55:56 | RES That’s a good question, I guess, yes, health research, yes. |
| **00:56:12** | **INT Well that’s all I’ll ask of you today, once I’ve got the transcript – hang on, I think there’s a delivery at the door and it might be important, can I just go and get it?** |
| 00:56:27 | RES Yes of course, of course. |
| **00:56:30** | **INT** [s/l 00:56:30] **Do my best at my speed walking.** |

**Audio Ends: [00:56:33.9]**