1. Date Transcribed: 20th May 2021
2. Interviewer(s): Daniel

Respondent(s): Caroline

| **00:00:00** | **INTERVIEWER Thanks very much for coming along to the interview today and for giving your time. I wonder if you could, can start with a bit of a history journey for me? And I wonder if you can remember the kind of first time you learnt about qualitative methods or qualitative techniques? Can you remember what that was and what the context was?** |
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| 00:00:30 | RESPONDANT Yes I actually have a science background and it was when I was training to become a teacher that I was then introduced to social science generally and qualitative research methods in particular. And so it was my dissertation for my PGCE that was my first foray into qualitative research. Which was, I’d say, I suppose it was mixed methods with some, you know a questionnaire type stuff followed by a couple of interviews |
| **00:01:23** | **And did you –** |
| 00:01:24 | of teachers |
| **00:01:25** | **Were you kind of taught qualitative methods and mixed methods as part of that, or was it something you looked up by yourself?** |
| 00:01:38 | Just trying to think. I can’t remember I just know that as a result of that particular piece of work, which went down very well, I became just more interested in you know in the social sciences generally, and my sense that as a scientific method and the objective were somehow missing out on the value of the subjective. And of course when you’re learning to become a teacher that kind of understanding the subjective position of the student, the pupil and the learner is incredibly important. So it was more a sense of, not the methods but the paradigm. |
| **00:02:39** | **And do you, in that particular project, I mean you kind of said that the, that kind of got you interested in the qualitative paradigm, was there something in particular, because it was mixed method that came out for qualitative data that was unique or contradictory to the mixed method, or purely quantitative part of that?** |
| 00:03:09 | I’m not sure what you’re asking me Daniel. |
| **00:03:10** | **That’s okay I’m just wondering, so if you can remember to that project, that was your kind of first use of any kind of qualitative method. From the qualitative data was there something that popped out at you for that that made you think, Oh okay qualitative methods that’s kind of interesting, that works kind of well?** |
| 00:03:33 | No it was as I was thinking about - the actual need came from personal experience, you know it’s extremely reflexive when you’re trying to learn to become a teacher. And trying to handle your identity as a private individual, as a lesbian in the 1990’s when to be openly gay at school was extremely difficult. It still is difficult I think but a lot less difficult in some circumstances. So how was I going to handle that private individual versus the public professional was really bothering me, and I needed to come to a position of understanding how I was going to handle that, and how others were handling that. And what my perceptions around homosexuality in schools and how people perceived it, was that how other people perceived it?  So I’m remembering now, the questionnaire stuff went out to all the teachers in the school, and the Head was amenable to that, you know it’s PGCE, it’s common for them to want to do some kind of survey with the staff. I got a really good return rate considering you know, relative to the numbers of staff. And I also kind of, I think I said, “Does anyone want to talk to me?” And a few teachers did actually come forward to talk to me in detail about their experience as lesbian teachers within that school. So that’s where the - and I was hoping that that would happen because it was them that I really needed to talk to, and so it was a reflection. Then the piece became not just that kind of hard data about what other people think around people coming out in school, teachers coming out in school, but then the stories from a couple of teachers who were experiencing that and were both closeted, and then my own position and how I was then going to operate as a private individual in a public profession. |
| **00:06:41** | **And was it, I mean those must have been some of your first kind of qualitative interviews, was it difficult doing on, speaking to closeted teachers about that, I mean how did that go?** |
| 00:06:58 | They were keen to talk to me. |
| **00:07:02** | **Okay and how does, how do you think you facilitated that? Why were they keen to talk to you about it when they were kind of not open themselves, or kind of publicly talking about it?** |
| 00:07:19 | I think, the opportunity to talk to someone, they must have trusted me. I can’t remember kind of making any you know grand statements or complicated forms that, you know met all the standard research criteria about how we trust somebody. It was more the person and the personal aspect of, you know I’d been working with these teachers as part of my term in school, more than term, so they’d had like two terms of seeing me operate so to speak, and I had been in their classrooms, and I can’t remember whether they’d seen me teach or not but they’d certainly see me operate around school.  So I don’t think there was anything that I actively did as part of the research process to build trust, it was just their familiarity with me that meant that somehow they felt able to trust me. Or maybe it was just the sheer desperation that opportunities were so few and far between to talk to somebody. And in terms of coded language there must have been language that I used that they knew that I was gay as well. And therefore there is an element of trust that comes from when you belong to groups, when you belong to the same group, you know that’s how autoethnography kind of builds some of its framework isn’t it, that sense of insider and outsider. So you know we were insiders together I think. |
| **00:09:28** | **So just kind of going back a bit you said you’d kind of done a lot of science stuff before, so presumably you’d done research before, but was this your first piece of, I don’t know how to describe it but how would you describe it, like social research or?** |
| 00:09:42 | Yes, yes definitely. I hadn’t, I’d done very little scientific research. My degree, it was a thin sandwich, so I had been out into the world of research and had to write up and you know seen the standard that was required at, in Research Institutes. But you know and my own dissertation was a piece of research, but I don’t think it was very good, it was pretty poor actually, and I don’t think I was terribly interested in that style of finding out. |
| **00:10:29** | Okay that’s interesting, and do you think that’s something that’s changed, you’re interested in that style now? |
| 00:10:37 | I still am, I still think, depending upon the question that you want to ask I still think that there is a value to the, you know the hypothesise and test kind of routine and the scientific method. But I think it’s quite narrow and I don’t think you know that the statistical analysis involved in that particularly interests me. |
| **00:11:08** | **Okay, and you also kind of said that you don’t think that research was very good. I mean if you had to go back and do it now are there kind of some obvious things that you’d do differently?** |
| 00:11:19 | I’d just be much more robust in my process, I think I was you know I got more and more bored measuring seedlings. Yes, so I just think, yes I don’t think it was terribly robust, and the time that one spends thinking about the data, that just doesn’t float my boat when I’m thinking about numbers. |
| **00:11:57** | Sure, sure and then – |
| 00:12:02 | So one of the things I enjoy about qualitative research is thinking about the data itself, not just about the problem but the actual data that I have. |
| **00:12:13** | **And so, when you were doing that PGCE was it because, did you do the research project because there was a requirement or that was something you particularly wanted to do?** |
| 00:12:25 | Everyone had to do a project of some sort, yes it was a requirement. |
| **00:12:30** | **So at that stage I mean would you describe, would you describe yourself as kind of like training to be able to be an educator or did you have a sense of wanting to become a researcher at that stage?** |
| 00:12:43 | No definitely an educator. |
| **00:12:47** | **Okay, okay so that was kind of your first blush I guess, and then presume - so it kind of sounds like you probably went on and did various other different types of research that were purely qualitative after that?** |
| 00:13:04 | Not particularly I think after that what happened was that we were, you know it would be I think egotistical to say, “Oh yes I was encouraged to do a Masters degree straightaway or at the earliest opportunity”. We were **all** encouraged to you know do a Masters degree at the earliest opportunity, but it so happened that somebody pointed me towards somebody who was interested in recruiting students who were interested in sexuality research. |
| **00:13:46** | **Okay right, so it was going to be a Masters degree in research, was that going to be?** |
| 00:13:46 | So at the same time - no it was taught Masters, but in terms of their, it was a taught Masters with a research element at the end. And they were just, you know I suppose anyone who’s running a Masters programme wants to have students on the programme. But they pointed me towards them and I’d, we’d all been encouraged as part of our professional development to consider doing a Masters degree as soon as possible, you know don’t wait.  So I did my Masters degree, registered the following year as soon as I qualified, and you then registered to do the Masters degree at the same time as starting out as a teacher. |
| **00:14:38** | **That Masters was in education?** |
| 00:14:41 | It was in Human Relations. |
| **00:14:45** | **Right okay, okay.** |
| 00:14:49 | Which is a woolly branch of, I say woolly I shouldn’t say that, but it’s essentially a big part of the qualitative paradigm, you know we didn’t really look at much of the positivistic theories of psychology, we were looking at the branches of psychology that are qualitative. |
| **00:15:22** | **Okay, and so at this stage, and now you’ve got a Masters under your belt, but you’re kind of, your identity is, you’ve done another research project but this stage you’re kind of, your identity’s still I guess as a teacher, as like an educator? You’re still kind of moving forward in that realm?** |
| 00:15:43 | Yes and I suppose I still consider myself largely an educator. The research aspect of it kind of comes from that, the subjective positioning of, How do I become a better educator? How do others do it? How can we make things better for the context of individual educators out there? |
| **00:16:23** | **Okay, so the research is kind of like a feedback mechanism to improve your teaching, I guess and a little bit –** |
| 00:16:29 | Yes, you know teachers are encouraged to be reflexive and, yes I suppose in the world of educational research you get a lot of researchers who are looking at the reflexive aspects of teaching. And research projects that, you know they’re often mixed-methods and then for me you know I’ve been drafted in to do the research interviews or analyse from a qualitative perspective, but often as part of a bigger programme of activity. |
| **00:17:13** | **And you’ve mentioned a couple of times this, talking about different types of being reflexive and a reflexive aspect of things. I mean what does that mean for you? How would you describe reflexivity in that context?** |
| 00:17:28 | Oh God, - |
| **00:17:33** | **Just because it’s one of those thing that I think has different meanings for different people.** |
| 00:17:38 | Yes it’s, yes it does. I suppose I was thinking earlier about the subjective and the objective and being reflexive for me is you take your subjectivity and you really examine it and attempt to understand it. And then one of the ways of being reflexive is to then come back to a more objective positioning of, Okay so what does that mean for me objectively? What does that mean for me subjectively? Am I prepared to make those changes that you know I think might be necessary? Objectively these are the changes that I think I might need to make, you know in my behaviour or my responses to things, but subjectively this is what I’m finding hard about that. Okay, so objectively what might I do about that if, and do I want to do? So I think it’s called flip-flopping, I think it’s ethnomethodological isn’t it? |
| **00:18:54** | **Okay, right.** |
| 00:18:56 | Yes so it’s this flip-flopping backwards and forwards between the subjective and objective. |
| **00:19:03** | **Okay, and is that something that’s not only kind of for your own benefit but because you teach, that’s something that kind of is reflected in what you teach as well?** |
| 00:19:15 | I would hope so. |
| **00:19:17** | **Okay, I mean not just that like how you teach but things that you learn that you teach when you are teaching research.** |
| 00:19:30 | One of the things that I do fairly religiously, there have been times when it’s dropped off a little, but I always do a post-session what do you call them, kind of review. You know – |
| **00:19:55** | **Like after a teaching session not research session, okay?** |
| 00:19:59 | Yes, so not a research but after teaching I always do a like a SWAT analysis because I think it’s helpful. One - from a kind of practical position. Two - from a, even subjects that you know and classes that I’ve been teaching for years, you notice things and sometimes there’s trends emerge, like I’ve talked too much, I talk too much I need to listen more, I talk too much. But without that, you know when there have been phases in my teaching when for whatever reason we haven’t done that, usually because - actually I know why the reason that that often happened was because you know the Institution would start to say, “Oh we’re bringing in this new process where everyone’s going to do a, you know a review of their teaching, and we’ve got this new form”, or something, and it never appears. So I kind of stop in anticipation of this new process and then it starts and it doesn’t go anywhere. And then I realise, Well that wasn’t going anywhere, I’ll go back to my own way of doing it and forming my own evidence for myself. |
| **00:21:26** | **Because it does sound like that continuing reflexivity and that continuing kind of having a process for that is important to you, important enough that when the bureaucracy if you call it that isn’t wanting to do that, that’s something you wanted to do out of your fruition.** |
| 00:21:44 | Yes I think it’s incredibly important. If you’re going to be a professional who wants to stay up- to-date, improve your perform - it’s continuous professional development. Doesn’t happen all by itself. And as I get older I realised that if you don’t do those kinds of things you can get complacent, and you know I have been guilty of complacency, even with those kind of processes and so I do, I think it’s incredibly important that we do these things, but people don’t. |
| **00:22:26** | **Sure, sure. And so let’s talk about now, about teaching because you do quite a lot of teaching I understand –** |
| 00:22:39 | Yes, yes. |
| **00:22:40** | **And qualitative, kind of teaching qualitative methods and qualitative research etc. and paradigms, that’s only part of that is that right?** |
| 00:22:48 | Yes. |
| **00:22:50** | **Okay, so how would you describe, what do you teach? How do you describe that?** |
| 00:22:56 | I suppose it’s, it’s general qualitative methodology and practice of research. It’s aimed at Doctoral researchers and early career researchers, often from clinical backgrounds who for whatever reason are being compelled or volunteering to actually take a bit of a shift in their project and start to engage in qualitative research methods, methodology. |
| **00:23:38** | **Okay, so I mean that’s kind of interesting because I think that’s quite a common journey, and it sounds like a journey that you went through as well.** |
| 00:23:51 | Yes. |
| **00:23:51** | **I mean how do people, how do people respond to their kind of, their first taste of qualitative methods? I mean what questions do they have? What issues do they have? Do they turn their nose up at it?** |
| 00:24:06 | It’s that paradigm shift, I suppose I don’t present them, I don’t present qualitative research as something that’s in opposition to scientific research, or the scientific method should we say. Although I know you can view it from that way, and many people who’ve come from clinical and scientific background, or more positivistic backgrounds have been taught to see it in that way. So many of them are very uncomfortable with either being asked to do this kind of research, or told because oh I don’t know the funding body has decided - it’s been written into the project by somebody else because that’s what the funders were looking for, you know kind of cynical positions. And so not presenting it as something in opposition, actually acknowledging the value of scientific research and the randomised control trial, and actually knowing a little bit about what I’m talking about, about the value of those things actually means that they’re willing to open their minds a little more. So it’s that non-judgement of them as coming from a particular paradigm. None of those – |
| **00:25:49** | **But it sounds like what you’re kind of saying there is that you present yourself as being, yes your identity as a researcher is not purely one way or the other, and that kind of helps them engage?** |
| 00:26:06 | Well no, no I am very honest with them about, “Here’s what I personally believe and value and here’s what you might believe and value and you have good reasons for believing and valuing those things”. It’s just that you know I have reasons for believing and valuing this, but that doesn’t mean that you know I have to convince you. It’s not, I never want to convince them that they need to think like me. They need to reach their own conclusions about their research methodologies, the purpose of their research.  So it always becomes around, What’s best for the research and the research question, and some of them, they’re not all there for cynical reasons, some of them are there because they realise that qualitative research. They’re starting that journey of realising that positivistic research will only take you so far. Or will take you into realms, certain realms but then there’s all these spaces in-between where questions are not being asked because we don’t know what we don’t know. |
| **00:27:28** | **And have you seen any kind of change in the attitudes of people when they start out on these courses, over the years that you’ve been teaching? I mean are people generally more open or more closed to qualitative methods? How are those initial, kind of fragilities kind of –** |
| 00:27:0047 | I would say overwhelmingly positive response to, Oh my God I had no idea that actually one - it was so robust, the processes, this isn’t just having a chat with somebody and then me making up what I want to say about it. The actual epistemology behind it and the thinking behind it and the foundations and the processes that you kind of go through in order to reach your answers, and how you justify that process is incredibly robust. And so yes, overwhelmingly people go, “Oh my God”, they use words like, “My mind is blown”. I constantly use this expression about, The unknown unknowns, and they go, “Oh my God I had no idea that I didn’t know that, and now I know what you mean about the unknown unknowns because I didn’t realise I didn’t know what that was when I came in here this morning”. So very often phrases like that, especially from the more experienced positivistic research groups or individuals. |
| **00:29:14** | **And you’ve used this term robust a couple of times I mean what does that mean to you in the context of qualitative research, and why is that so important for people coming from that positivistic background?** |
| 00:29:27 | I suppose there’s two things. You could look at it from an, almost like an audit trail in terms of being robust practically, physically that you can track back, and you know your various decisions, and they’re very interested in validation and notions of truth. So actually kind of having processes, practical processes that ensure that, We did this but then we didn’t do that, and then I don’t know why I didn’t do that but I didn’t do it, and -  And that kind of thing matters to positivistic research, having a clear process. And I’m not saying that you know you’re doing replicable research, reproduceable research, but there is an element of if you change it you know where you’ve changed it and why you changed it. What was the subjective circumstance which meant that you decided to do something different, or you reached a particular decision or conclusion? Whereas in positivistic research you pretend those things don’t happen and you present it in a nice average, statistical average table with standard deviation of you know 2.5 max.  So, and many of them have reached that kind of conclusion about their science, that they knew there were outliers and anomalies in the data that had been excluded and that’s, it’s not statistically invalid but it does leave them with that sense of it’s not the complete picture. So they kind of understand those things happen in science, and it gives them a kind of a sense of, Oh that’s what I do with that, if I was doing this with a scientific piece of research, and they’re often working with people rather than plants like I used to. It gives them that sense of, Oh my God, there are standard ways of talking about these things that exist out there, like transcript protocols, like interview summary forms, like field notes. And the notes that I have taken I could actually, you know make them part of my evidence, like we do our field notes become part of our evidence, they’re not just something that happens and everyone forgets about it. |
| **00:32:15** | **So it sounds like –** |
| 00:32:17 | So they end up kind of valuing those things. |
| **00:32:19** | **And so it sounds like, do you think that students gain from learning these kind of paradigms and then take those things back to, even if they’re doing very positivistic, very quantitative research?** |
| 00:32:37 | I think it, you know when you get the opportunity to think about your professional practice, I think very often if you are thinking deeply then you do then take something back. How long that lasts is a different matter, but I do think for some of the participants it creates quite a large shift in their patterns of thinking. And certainly the way they view qualitative research I think has been, I’d love to say changed forever, and yes some of them say, use words like that, “I’ll never look at it in the same way again”, or, “I’ll be a bit more fair, or less judgemental”. Or, “I’ll know what good qualitative research or I’ll have a better idea of what good qualitative research looks like”. |
| **00:33:49** | **And on these courses what kind of things do people struggle with, with qualitive paradigms and qualitative methods?** |
| 00:34:02 | I think for a lot of them it’s the language. You know they’re going on courses also that are being delivered by academics in their department or their school or across a group of schools, and they’re having to do like, yes the philosophy of social science and Popper and Kuhn and you know Giddens and all this kind - really deep philosophical stuff. And even if they have come from a social science background, and a lot of my students come from health sciences, architecture, my God their head is exploding, and I’m using their kind of phrases. And they don’t understand what’s meant about you know epistemology. They read something and, Yes I think I understand that, and then you ask them, “So what is epistemology?” And they don’t know. So I give them some really, really, almost over-simplistic ways of understanding the language of qualitative research, even if that’s just what’s ontology? What’s epistemology? So that when they go and do their reading they can actually begin to grasp a little more and make more considered decisions about their own research.  I always say to them, “You’re the one that has to it, you’re the one answering the questions, you don’t have to do it like I would do it, you have to do it how you would do it, but be able to say why you made those decisions”. Because of course they are doing a PhD and they will have to defend themselves. |
| **00:36:08** | **So how is your approach to teaching those things kind of changed over time? I mean what didn’t work at the beginning that you think you’ve improved in how you teach or explain those things kind of, yes as a more experienced teacher?** |
| 00:36:25 | I think I’m better at letting them explain things to each other rather than always me trying to explain it. I think I’m better at using fewer words to explain things. Yes, I’d say they’re the two things. I still use very similar examples to the ones I used in the early days, but I’ve got a few more to draw from because sometimes you know other people in the room will give an example, and I’ll think, yes I’ll hang on to that because that is a good example. Yes it is valuing the knowledge that’s in the room, I always say, “I’m not the only person that knows stuff”, because I have a lot of research students who come from backgrounds where whatever the teacher says goes, and I’m at pains to point that out that actually what you know is every bit as important as what I know. Because it’s your research probably more important than what I know. |
| **00:37:58** | **And do you get a sense over that period of time, you talked a little bit about how the students come in perceiving qualitative research, do you get a sense of how that’s changed within the discipline? Within science in general?** |
| 00:38:21 | I seem to get a lot more people on courses now that are doing mixed methods. So, and from health sciences doing mixed methods, and from engineering human factors who are doing mixed methods. |
| **00:38:47** | **When you say more people doing mixed methods do you mean before people would do pure qualitative projects, or there’s more qualitative as a mixed component?** |
| 00:38:59 | Yes I’m trying to assess whether that’s, I think there’s quite a few factors going on there. One is the actual availability of the training, for them to actually have access to someone who can you know potentially help them with qualitative stuff. For me to hear what they’re saying, if I wasn’t doing the training I wouldn’t hear what they were saying and I wouldn’t know. |
| **00:39:45** | **But I mean from an –** |
| 00:39:47 | Yes there’s a lot of factors there, yes. Can you ask me that question again later. |
| **00:39:52** | **Yes sure of course, of course.** |
| 00:39:54 | I do think it’s an interesting one. |
| **00:39:56** | **I mean the kind of way I was going to tease that out was just to think about, I mean do you get a sense of how kind of like your colleagues and other people delivering training, do you get a sense of how they view the stuff they teach? Is there a sense of, Oh well it’s mandatory they’ve got to go and do the qualitative bit but it’s not going to be any use to them? Or has the attitude in –** |
| 00:40:25 | It’s not mandatory, I think that’s the thing. That aspect of training, for some of the faculties and schools have mandatory training programmes and I’m fairly familiar with most of the programmes, and I don’t always ask it on my qualitative course but on a number of the other courses you’re trying to go, Who’s here because you have to be here. Like planning and time management, Who’s here because it’s mandated? And nearly everyone puts their hand up. Very few people choose to go on that course, I don’t know why they’re not beating a path to go on that course. But with the qualitative, you know it’s elective and often, it does go through little cycles, there are cycles of what’s popular and what’s not popular. But there have been times when you know you have people begging to come on the course, and course managers say, “Can you put more people on this course because we really need more people on this course?” |
| **00:41:46** | **I mean you were saying that most people come from a kind of, some kind of health background I mean do you think that the attitude to qualitative or mixed method stuff has changed within health over the time you’ve been teaching methods?** |
| 00:41:59 | Yes I do, yes. Again it might be a long cycle rather than a short cycle that I can witness every two or three years, or five years. It might be like one of those sort of generational cycles. You know perhaps if we were talking about the 1960’s everyone would have been doing qualitative stuff, I don’t know. But definitely over the past twenty years I think health research is more participant focused. I think there is a realisation that you can’t just tell people to you know take their tablets and they’ll do it, you know. And that stands as a metaphor for all kinds of areas for all kinds of areas of health and wellbeing. You know who used the word wellbeing five years ago? And yet virtually every, it’s not just the media, everyone’s talking about it.  And when we get people who are coming from overseas some people will do mixed methods, and this kind of answers your question from earlier, some people will do mixed methods because they personally want to do qualitative research but they need some stats for it to have some credibility as a PhD when they take it back to their Institutions. I think that has gone down, those kinds of statements, I hear those less and I more often encounter people who are just being encouraged to do mixed methods or they’re interested in mixed methods, or whereas perhaps ten years ago they just would have done the stats and been happy with that they’re actually interested or being encouraged to have a little something else as well.  And whilst that might seem derogatory towards qualitative research, ‘Oh wouldn’t it be nice to have some vignettes’, says the steering group type, Oh great we’re the add-on—an afterthought. Well if actually by opening their mind to that they begin to see the value, and I think that’s the journey that the whole of research is on not just individual researchers, I think it’s the whole of research. How do we get better at meeting the needs of our society? |
| **00:44:53** | **So would you still just, I mean how do you describe your kind of professional identity now? Are you still doing research, do you do much research at the moment?** |
| 00:45:08 | Not a great deal and anyone who knows me I think would know how highly I value my identity as an educator. So often when I talk to me about what I do they often interpret what I do as research when actually it’s not it’s education. |
| **00:45:31** | **And do you think, and that’s kind of, it sounds like how you kind of started out on this journey, I mean how would you feel your identity** has **changed over that period of time?** |
| 00:45:49 | I suppose I talk to a lot of Academics who don’t really see themselves as educators and I think that’s a shame. I think it depends upon what kind of Institution they’re in, and I was in a very research-intensive Institution and I don’t think teaching was valued. And many of them have been promoted or put into an Academic post because of their research not because of their background as educators. In fact they have no, very small background and no formal background as educators. And they feel very uncomfortable.  I’m the opposite. I have got formal training as a researcher but it’s not my identity, it’s not you know my way of being. |
| **00:46:58** | **And what’s, what would you say was your favourite part of teaching or the teaching process, or engaging with students?** |
| 00:47:07 | Yes it’s that, ‘A-ha’ moment. Is it George Kelly, I can’t remember, but the big ‘A-ha’ moment when you can see quite literally see the light-bulb go on above their head. And it doesn’t matter what subject or what area, when they - you can suddenly see that this, whatever you’ve been talking about, whatever they’ve been practicing, whatever process you’ve been helping them work through it seems to have meaning to them. So it’s the generation of meaning to each individual student. |
| **00:47:53** | **Just a bit of a side, I just wonder if you’ve been doing, have you been doing kind of more online teaching rather than face-to-face recently?** |
| 00:48:02 | Yes, yes the whole of 2020. I mean I did start doing webinars, whoa gosh way back in 2012 I think, I did my first webinar. |
| **00:48:17** | **I’m just wondering do you still get to see that ‘A-ha’ moment when you’re not doing it face-to-face?** |
| 00:48:25 | It’s harder, some people are very communicative and you know will use chat boxes and breakout rooms and things like that but the majority of stuff that I’ve done this year has been really limited in terms of its pedagogic versatility. It’s like one hour to do something that you’d normally cover in three-and-a-half hours. And so the opportunities, what it ends up becoming is a, Here’s the information, here’s some of the processes, we can start them here in the session but you are going to have to go away and finish these things for yourself, or find out more for yourself. And you do get people who, expressing what they’ve learnt, or saying, “Thank you that was helpful”. Or those kind of things, but it’s not the same as being in the room with someone. |
| **00:49:45** | **And is it, so has that been less satisfying I guess?** |
| 00:49:50 | The satisfaction has come from the actual design, and so maximising things for, they’re not just broadcasts, that they are actually genuine attempts to engage people in a learning process rather than just a broadcast. |
| **00:50:13** | **And do you have a favourite qualitative method or technique to teach? Is there something that’s particularly fun or particularly fun to watch students learn about?** |
| 00:50:26 | Oh gosh, I think one of the things that I enjoy teaching them about is coding and the practice of coding, and you know remember I did say that I keep things extremely simple and essentially we go down the route of data generated codes or theory generated codes. And we use different, you know I give them some different words so they can recognise those two different approaches.    And we go through an exercise where one group, or one half of the class has to generate apriori codes and we use shopping as an example because in the absence of literature reviews and what-have-you, they’ve got to go off something, so they can go off their own experience of, What might I be interested in with this particular research question? I give them a question about shopping, I can’t remember what it is now but give them the question. So they generate the list of codes.  And then another group I give them a transcript, and it’s actually a transcript that they’ve had a go at generating themselves, they’ve had the audio of the interview already and they’ve generated or had a go at generating a small transcript. And I give them my transcript, which is just a transcript, it’s not a perfect transcript, it’s not a model transcript, it’s not how they should do it, it’s just a transcript. And then use that to derive data generated codes.  And then we present the codes. And everyone then can compare and contrast and see the difference it makes and begin to think about, Well what do I want to do? And of course the reality is that they’ll probably end up doing a bit of a mixed approach. But before that they weren’t able to see the difference. They were struggling with the language. They didn’t know what that would mean for their own research. Some of them felt they were doing the wrong thing if they took someone’s words and generated a code from within the data, they felt that everything had to be you know officially approved and cross-referenced and verified within the group, or with their Supervisor at the very least and then applied to the data.  And so that’s probably one of the things that I feel most proud of having, as a task, it’s just a task, seeing them learn from that. |
| **00:53:23** | **Has it ever happened where people have just come up with completely crazy or unexpected codes and themes or?** |
| 00:53:31 | Yes, very occasionally you think, Oh God no one’s said that before. You know you do see the same types of things, it’s a fairly limited transcript. But there’s usually, you know one that’s kind of, Oh that’s a bit different to how other people have seen it, and then every now and again you’ll kind of go, Oh wow, that’s a really interesting way of looking at that.  And they’re actually quite, you know when they’re looking at the transcript they realise how messy and how difficult transcription can be, and how important it is for them to decide how they’re going to transcribe for their particular purpose and what they’re losing if they use a particular approach. You know it is a common question of, “Oh I don’t want to transcribe my research, I’ve got, my Supervisor says I should and I’ve got money to do it, what do you think?” And well yes, this is one of their few opportunities where they’ll get time to spend with their data. I know they think they’re busy and stretched now but God, wait until they’re actually doing a research project. They won’t have that time for learning. This is their apprenticeship, so learning those kinds of, What am I missing? What am I not doing? You know whereas an experienced Professor can make those decisions and know what they’re losing by saying, We won’t just do it like this, just do an over-view narrative, because we don’t need that. You know when you’re a PhD student you don’t know what you’re losing by doing that. |
| **00:55:30** | **Great, I mean I think that’s all the questions I have. I think I’ve covered most of what I wanted to go over. Is there anything in addition you wanted to add, or talk about?** |
| 00:55:41 | I suppose we haven’t talked about interviewing. You know my PhD research really was when I did learn to interview. And when I was a research fellow more interviewing. Loads of little projects that you get involved in that are not actually your PhD. |
| **00:56:12** | **So what did you learn through doing interviewing? What did you learn over that process, and what went wrong to start, and how did that improve as you went on to these different projects?** |
| 00:56:26 | Well my, I suppose my first, Oh God, first few projects that I did, including you know like PGCE I was talking about, we didn’t record audio we relied on note taking and field notes and those kinds of things. And of course nowadays that’s extremely rare that you wouldn’t have an actual transcript. |
| **00:57:00** | **And what was the reason for that at the time?** |
| 00:57:01 | And so I - at the time? It was just more common. It was – |
| **00:57:08** | **Just what was acceptable, the default?** |
| 00:57:12 | Yes, yes default acceptable. You know taking a tape machine into the field, yes. And of course for Supervisors and project advisers, you know a Sony Walkman might have been something they wouldn’t even have had themselves, some of the older project advisors. So the notion of going out there with your Dictaphone type thing, they were expensive. |
| **00:57:48** | **But do you think that’s something that’s improved, the robustness and the perception of qualitative research?** |
| 00:57:55 | I’ve got mixed feelings about that, you know poor research process is poor research process. And just because you’ve transcribed an audio, then when you sit down to do your analysis and you just skip lightly across the surface, isn’t going to save you from being not actually paying in-depth attention to the data, yet I think it’s sometimes seen as such. You know paying attention to the story is really important to me, and I think if - you asked about methodology and what’s my favourite and so on, it’s the story that is told. So it’s the narrative. And actually that story can be told through, you know by a narrator, which is you the researcher through notes. And you don’t necessarily need to audio-record.  It’s much more, if we think of human evolution and how we create meaning human beings, we pass on our knowledge through telling stories. We pass on how we feel by telling stories. Just sticking to the facts often is exceedingly boring. |
| **00:59:59** | **Yes, and do you think that’s something that –** |
| 00:59:59 | It doesn’t give a good picture. |
| **01:00:01** | **And do you think that’s something you’ve got better at? Did you always start out with the intention through your research to tell a story?** |
| 01:00:09 | I think I did, and have I got better? No sometimes I think, sometimes, because of you know other people’s requirements or what you think, or you read something and you think, Oh actually maybe, let me have a think about that. And so you start paying attention to different areas. So it’s one of those kinds of things that as a learner where you become, at first you have quite a narrow little circle of world view, and mine was story telling. And then as you grow and develop and become more exposed to information and ideas you don’t become more certain you become less certain. And actually you begin to feel a little incompetent, and actually you’re not terribly competent you realise around some of these things. And it’s, part of the learning circle is that actually you do become consciously incompetent. |
| **01:01:30** | **What do you mean by that?** |
| 01:01:30 | And then you - consciously incompetent? I’m sure you’ve all seen people who go, Yes I can do that. And there they are bashing away at something and you go, “Oh my God you said you could do that, and turns out that it’s all right”, bit like an undergraduate project I suppose. Yes it’s all right for an undergraduate project. But it hasn’t got this, and they haven’t looked at that and they haven’t considered the other. You know, because their view is quite constricted. So their, they think they are competent but they’re only competent to a particular level. And then as you become exposed you become conscious of your incompetence, the things that you can’t do, the things that you don’t know, the things that you didn’t even know you didn’t know. And then, for me as I’ve worked my way through and kind of looked at different methods and different ways of, Should I be valuing the expression more than the overall story? And like, looking at conversation analysis, am I interested at the use of a particular word repeatedly? Am I interested in the pause length, signs of content?  And then I’ve kind of made my way back towards valuing the story and consciously wanting to value that again, but knowing about all those other approaches. And I have options should the research require it, to kind of re-visit those things. And being conscious of what level of incompetence I might have in those areas. |
| **01:03:27** | **I mean what are your kind of top tips, I mean how do you tell a good story from a research point of view?** |
| 01:03:35 | I was hoping you wouldn’t ask me that. |
| **01:03:42** | **You don’t have to answer it, you don’t have to answer any questions.** |
| 01:03:47 | Yes, because there’s loads of intellectual stuff out there about you know beginning, middle and end. Victory narratives, cliff-hangers, and I think you can be taught to tell a good story, but I think crucially you have to think about, What is it that the learner would be - not the learner, the listener, bit of a Freudian slip there; the listener be interested in and what’s the point of this story? You know, why am I telling this story? Is it to make them laugh, is it to cry? What? I don’t know. |
| **01:04:40** | **So is emotion an important part of telling a good story?** |
| 01:04:48 | Could be. I’m – |
| **01:04:54** | **I’m just interested because you said laugh, you referred you make them laugh or cry rather than make them understand something.** |
| 01:05:01 | Humour is always quite important to me, you know for me, but that’s just me. A good story generally, I suppose I’m thinking back to some of the very earliest types of ethnography which essentially is trying to give you a window into somebody else’s life. What it’s like to live a life. And in the past of course it was lives that were exotic and very different to our own.  And so some story telling has to kind of involve that mundane stuff of life that everyone will recognise in their own lives. So you get up in the morning, what do you do when you get up in the morning? Well in my life we do this. How do you respond - it’s the classic kind of ethnographic approach to, you know how people live their lives. How do they go through their rituals? Who’s important in a society? Who’s valued? Who do you love? You know, is there a thing like marriage in the society? Is there not? Is it, you know monogamous? Is it, what’s the stages of young people? Is the, you know what are the traditions of how do you go from being a child to an adult? All those classic ethnographic areas of interest I think constitute good stories. |
| **01:06:57** | **Great, great. Good. Well I think we’re kind of out of time now, but** |
| 01:07:03 | Yes very much so. |
| **01:07:03** | **But thanks for sharing your story.** |
| 01:07:07 | Thank you. |
| **01:07:07** | **And yes, thanks so much for sharing everything. And as I said, any final things you wanted to add before I stop the recording?** |
| 01:07:19 | No I think there’s plenty for you to go on there. |
| **01:07:24** | **Great.** |

**Audio Ends: [01:07:24.8]**