1. Date Transcribed: 27th May 2021
2. Interviewer(s): Cathy

Respondent(s): Jackie

**INT: So, Jackie, I think- you haven’t always been a researcher, have you?**

**[00:00:06]**

RES: No.

**[00:00:06]**

**INT: Would you like to tell me a little bit about your professional background?**

**[00:00:10]**

RES: I started off with a CQSW, a Certificate of Qualification in Social Work. I trained as a probation officer. So, I did that for a few years. And then I moved into teaching- did a PGCE and moved into teaching. And while I was there, I started attending a weekly Saturday workshop at the School of Ed, looking at community education and parental involvement in their children’s schooling.

And that was actually my first experience of research, which led to being invited to take up a studentship, which resulted in an MPhil. So, that- we can perhaps talk about that a bit more, a bit later. But that was my first experience of doing research.

**[00:01:10]**

**INT: So, were you a secondary school teacher, Jackie? Or what did you teach?**

**[00:01:14]**

RES: I trained as primary, and just as I qualified, there were no jobs in the area for primary school teachers. So, I went into a pool- what they called a pool at that stage for schools with vacancies to dip into. And I was invited from that point for an interview by a Comp. And so, I taught at secondary level for a bit. And that’s when I- yes, that’s when I started doing the workshops at the School of Ed. And when they invited me to do this studentship- a full-time studentship- I was so ignorant about these things, really. I didn’t even think or know there was such a thing as secondment, which would have been the wisest thing to do. So I just left and took up this full-time studentship.

And then, when that was completed, neither of my supervisors had a doctorate themselves. And so, when I got to the two-year point with submitting the thesis for MPhil and got that- I mean, I had a male and a female supervisor. The female supervisor became a friend, and still is. And we still meet up from time to time. And it was years later that she said to me how guilty she’d always felt in later years about not advising me to go for an upgrade. Because since neither of them had got a doctorate, they didn’t know anything about the system either. And she said, you know, you would hardly have had to have done any more work on that thesis to, you know, apply, and get an upgrade, do another year, and get your doctorate.

So, anyway, I finished after two years and came out with an MPhil, and then I had my children. And for the next few years, when they were little, I went back part-time, both into the probation service and into teaching. But this time, at primary level. So, I did both- I did those, kind of, sequentially for a few years when the children were little. And when the younger one started school, I started full-time- I got a job at Loughborough. A research job at Loughborough. And I suppose that was the beginning of, kind of, 20 plus years as a researcher- as an academic researcher.

**[00:04:08]**

**INT: So, did you know after the MPhil, were you keen to get back into research? Or was it just one of a number of things that you could have done?**

**[00:04:17]**

RES: I suppose I knew I didn’t want to go back into teaching, and the probation service- A, the probation service was already changing in a way that, you know, didn’t suit my values particularly. But also, it was- the last post I’d had in the probation service, a half time post before the kids were both at full-time school, was a specialist post in the magistrates court. And I absolutely loved it. But specialist posts in the service were few and far between, and so they rotated people. So, they wouldn’t let you stay forever. And at that point, I knew too much time had elapsed, and too many changes had been made for me to contemplate becoming a field probation officer again, with a caseload.

So, yes. I suppose there was-

**[00:05:25]**

**[COMPUTER SOUND INTERUPTION]**

**INT: Yes. There we have that-**

**Audio ends: 00:05:30**

**RECORDING RESTARTED**

**[00:00:00] INT: -that error of not setting to record on Zoom.**

[00:00:11] RES: I did know it was being recorded, thank you. Yes. I suppose there was some stick there, as much as carrot, in that I felt- you know, two doors had closed to me. Or were closed to me. And I’d absolutely loved doing the two-year, full-time research at the School of Ed.

So, yes. When I saw this post at Loughborough that I was alerted to by a friend of the family, I went for that and got it. Yes. So, yes. And then I didn’t look back from there, I suppose. Although, you know, it was a fairly bumpy ride being you know, on fixed, short-term contracts all the time. Yes.

**[00:01:14] INT: Do you want to say just a little bit about that? The bumpiness of your career?**

[00:01:20] RES: Yes. Well, the contracts got shorter and shorter. The longest project I worked on was a two-year one. The shortest was a month. And even with the luxury of a two-year project, you’re spending the first part of the project orienting yourself, you know, to what’s required. You’re doing the job itself, you know, the designing of the project, the conducting of the fieldwork, the data analysis, the interpretation, the writing up. But with the time you’re even halfway through that process, you’re already looking around for the next project so that you’re not going to be unemployed. And various downsides come with that. I mean, the sense of insecurity is taxing, to say the least, psychologically.

I was tied, geographically, you know. So, I couldn’t just up sticks, I’d got a young family. I couldn’t just up sticks and move all over the country. And then there are things- lots of things to do with publishing, you know, whether the project has allowed time for writing of papers and publishing. And that’s a long process. And then there are all sorts of things about research relationships within teams. And as the person who’s doing the fieldwork, not the PI on the project, you’re working constantly working to a new boss, often to several bosses on a single project if it’s interdisciplinary, and inter-institutional, as some of my projects were.

So, yes. It’s asking quite a lot. And sometimes, I was moving all around the country. I mean, on one two-year project the fieldwork was nationwide, so to speak. Well, it was England and Scotland. I don’t think there were any interviews in Wales or Ireland.

So, I was away for a week at a time. And this was in the days before satnavs. So, you had an address in some part of the country, go and find it. Yes. So-

**[00:04:10] INT: So, did you spend- was that- you said, 20-year career. Was most of that on temporary contracts? Or-**

[00:04:20] RES: All of it. Well, until I got to- until you and I met actually, at the School of Ed. And actually, having said that, when I landed up in the School of Ed at Nottingham, that was a two-year contract. Then it was renewed for another two years, at a time when there was some policy changes about-

**[00:04:46] INT: Yes. Yes, I remember that. Yes.**

[00:04:48] RES: Remember, if you’d been employed for two years, you were supposed- and then given another contract, you were eligible for a permanent post.

**[00:05:00] INT: That’s what happened to me too. Yes.**

[00:05:02] RES: You know, but it was on paper only. You know, because there was always the get out clause of, if there was sufficient money in the institutional pot to pay you. Or, if you’d brought in your own income. And again, you know, if you’re working non-stop on projects, it’s quite a lot to ask that you’re writing another project of your own to bring more money in, to cover your own salary.

So, yes. And the last- my last, I think, four years. I left Nottingham and got the first ever permanent research job at a research centre, back at Loughborough. And yes. So, that was permanent. The irony of that though is that you’re no longer working on a single project, and whilst I’ve described some of the downsides of that, where you can be responsible for everything, but you’re not the PI- you know, you can be responsible for, you know, here are the research questions, operationalise them, design the project, conduct the fieldwork, organise the fieldwork, conduct the fieldwork, do the analysis, interpret, write it up. And then by the time the publication’s come out, you’ve gone, hopefully, onto the next project and you might be lucky enough to get your name on the paper. Or not. Depending on your boss at the time.

Although this was a permanent post in a research centre, it was a kind of, Ford-ist if you like. You know, a kind of conveyor belt model where you’re now working on whatever project comes in, and the director of the centre tells you which project you’re going to be allocated to, and you get on with it. But you don’t get first author on anything because that’s always the director of the centre.

So, yes. There’s- although I absolutely loved doing research, the institution and organisation of research within higher education is very challenging for the researcher, quite often. If you’re not- if you’re a permanent member of the lecturing staff, it’s completely different. There, you’ve got a whole load of other challenges, you know. You’ve got a teaching load, and you’ve got to fit your research in somewhere. That’s a whole set of other challenges that I completely recognise. Mine’s a very- was a very particular experience. And I don’t think there are lots of me around anymore, to be honest. People who’ve had a 20-plus year, research only career.

**[00:08:08] INT: Is that a good thing? That there’s fewer people with that kind of experience?**

[00:08:13] RES: Is it a good thing? For whom? I don’t know how to answer that, Cathy, because I think it’s potentially, hugely exploitative of the researcher. As I say, it depends- you’re very much in the hands of your- of the PI on the project, or the Co I, and their values and integrity.

You amass a wealth of experience. But one of the difficulties of that is, there’s no kind of repository for it, if you like, because- and I’ve written and published a paper on this, called *Research Identities*. Because you do- you bundle up all that experience at the end of a project and take it away with you onto the next project. So, hopefully, you benefit that project. But how is all that experience and expertise kind of- where’s the repository for it? Apart from you, the individual. You know. And perhaps, the project that you’re working on now might be an example of such a repository. I mean there are methodology papers. Because often, they’re the bottom, you know, because you’ve got to get the findings out. You’ve got funders who want to know what the findings are. And writing methodology papers on top of academic publications, reports to funders, and so on. Sometimes, feel like a bit of a luxury that, you know, you don’t have time for.

**[00:10:11] INT: So, what would you describe your discipline as, Jackie?**

[00:10:17] RES: Sociology.

**[00:10:18] INT: Sociology. And what kind of researcher are you?**

[00:10:23] RES: Always qualitative. I’ve always worked on projects calling for qualitative research. Yes. And in terms of types of research according to funding opportunities, they’ve often been social policy. Apart from the period of time- the four years I spent at Nottingham in the School of Education when they were education. You know, they were to do with the student experience of higher education, those projects that I worked on there.

But again, I suppose you could call that applied research, in that the findings were always intended to be applicable to making some changes in policy, or practice, or professional practice. Yes. I mean, the papers that I eventually did start writing- the publications that I did start writing as single authored papers did become, kind of, theoretical and sociological. Not just policy or practice oriented. But mostly, those were the kinds of projects that I worked on. As I say, always qualitative. Often with a gender component.

**[00:12:00] INT: So, the- I do want to talk about the kinds of research that you’ve done, and your research practice, and your theoretical background. But I just kind of, want to touch on teaching and qualitative teaching that you may or may not have done. Have you-**

[00:12:22] RES: Yes. No, I’m not going to be any help to you there, Cathy, because I never did- well, I had a year at Derby University as an SL- senior lecturer in sociology, but I wasn’t teaching methods there, and it was a short-lived appointment. Because I was appointed for my expertise as a researcher, and because I’d got publications, and because, it was called the RAE at that time, was coming up. But as soon as I joined, so did a new- and I can’t remember whether it was Dean, or what- but senior member of staff who decided that Derby at that time, wasn’t the kind of university that could compete with the kind of, Russell Group universities. And so, it wasn’t going to even try to be a research-intensive university. It was going to be very much a local- focus on being a local university.

So, I think I was appointed for my research skills, and then almost immediately, told you know, they didn’t want research. So, I was teaching other stuff, inequalities and things like that.

So, I can’t- I’m not going to be any help to you on the teaching- learning and teaching part of the problem. Sorry.

**[00:14:05] INT: No, that’s all right. I mean, I think we’ve- yes, I’ve got one of these questions that kind of, what ways have things changed since you started your career? And we could go off in all sorts of directions. But I know that you’ve written about identity and I just wondered about your own sense of how your identity has changed since you first started research.**

[00:14:34] RES: Yes. I mean, that’s interesting. Because I came in with a social work background- well probation, but, you know, with a social work qualification. I think I brought a lot of transferable skills in terms of interviewing, in terms of listening, in terms of analysing- well, as a researcher, you’d call it qualitative data. But talk. What people were saying and interactions. So, I think there were a lot of transferable skills. But I was very conscious at the time, and I say this in that research identities paper. I was very conscious of the role boundaries. You know, that I had been a probation officer but now I was a researcher, and the two are very different. And so, I think- I mean, one of the skills I would say is, you know, being able to create rapport fairly quickly in interview situations, and listening- active listening skills, and creating the space for your interviewee to share their experiences with you, and the way they make sense of the world, their meaning-making practices, and so on. But I was also very conscious that- particularly when interviewing people about sensitive topics- and that happens not just on projects that have got a title that says, this is a sensitive area. You know, you can come up against something sensitive in any situation like this. You know, it can just kind of leap out and ambush you.

But I was very conscious of the differences between those two roles. That in a research situation, unlike being somebody’s social worker, you could open up an area and encourage somebody to talk about it and share personal experiences with you. But as a researcher, you were then going to say, “Thanks very much. Bye.” And leave them to it. You know, you weren’t going to be there to pick up any pieces and try and put people back together again if they shared with you a distressing topic, or whatever. So, I was quite conscious of- that’s just one way in which I was conscious, you know, of the difference between the two roles.

Another- so, that was very early on. When I first started, there was no training on how to do it. And I suppose, I just- yes. I learned as I went along. I learned from reading methods books. I learned from practice. Both, in terms of what I would call- although, this is a bit ‘quant-y’, but what I refer to as ‘operationalising’ research questions, you know.

**[00:18:05] INT: Have you got an example?**

[00:18:07] RES: An example? Did you say?

**[00:18:10] INT: Yes.**

[00:18:12] RES: Well, that very first project was about- in the School of Ed, was about exploring teacher-parent relationships, and encouraging- finding ways of encouraging greater parental involvement in their children’s learning. And I suppose- so, that’s pretty broad. So, when you’re starting- okay, this is the area we want to research. A first issue that arises might be- so, are we talking about children’s learning? Involving parents in their children’s learning? Or are we talking about involving parents in their children’s schooling? Because the two are very different. And until you’ve worked that- you know, right at the very beginning. Until you’ve worked that out, you can’t begin to think about, you know, designing a research project. How, you know- so, whatever issue you’re looking at, the first question is- the first thing is, you know, what kind of questions are we asking here exactly? What do we mean by the questions we’re asking? Or the topics we’re exploring. And then, what kind of data would we need to be able to answer those questions? Or to illuminate that topic. And then, what kind of methods then- research methods follow on from that, in terms of enabling us to collect that kind of data. Does that make sense?

**[00:20:03]** **INT: Yes. Yes. I think, when you said, “Oh, this is going to sound quant-y”, I was like, “Hmm, really?” And now I’m thinking, “yes that does sound quant-y”.**

[00:20:12] RES: Well, ‘operationalising’. Operationalising does a bit.

**[00:20:16] INT: Yes, it does, doesn’t it?**

[00:20:17] RES: But- I don’t know what other word to use, really, you know, ‘put it into practice’.

So, we decided, you know, we were interested in involving- how to involve parents in their children’s learning. So, it wasn’t just about school-based learning, it was about home-based learning. So, it was about relationships between home and school, and recognising that learning takes place in both of those arenas and looking at that learning and how to- and what were the barriers.

Because the premise was that, regardless of parents’ own backgrounds and educational achievements, parental involvement in their children’s learning enhances it. That was the premise that we were working upon. And so, how to encourage more of that. Whether it meant getting parents to go to traditional parents’ evenings when they’d hated school themselves and didn’t want to set foot through the door again. Or whether it meant, you know, encouraging parents to listen to their children read at home, which enhanced the child’s progress regardless of whether- even if the parent is illiterate, sitting with a child, you know, listening to it read to you, or looking at a picture book together was beneficial, and so on.

**[00:21:51] INT: It strikes me, Jackie, that this was a long time ago, but it seems quite vivid in your mind.**

[00:21:03] RES: Yes. I think that’s the case. And it is the case. Yes. Because I see- I keep talking about interviewing because that’s mostly what I’ve done. But I’ve also done- worked on, you know, what I’d call more of a proper ethnographic project, where there was participant and non-participant observation, and different kinds of data - interview-based, documentary, live interactional data, and so on. But for all of them- but perhaps particularly for interviews. I think they’re a very intimate experience and a very unusual experience as far as everyday life is concerned. And my experience has been that people have always responded very positively. Partly because it’s so unusual to have a space of an hour, an hour and a half, occasionally up to two, (but I was always very conscious of the amount of data I was going to have to handle. ‘Oh my god, I’ve got to transcribe all this!’) - it’s very unusual for a person to have that space where somebody is attentively listening to what you say because they’ve very interested in it. Yes.

So, that’s quite unusual. And it’s unusual for them- as I say, I found always very positive responses. And for me, it was always- as I say, it was always a very intimate experience and I carry certain- I suppose it’s like teachers and certain pupils, I guess. But I carry certain interviewees with me still. And whether it’s years ago, or more recently, when I drive around various places, I pass and I say, ‘Oh, yes. I did an interview there. I did an interview there. I did an interview there.’ And I can conjure up, you know, the people, the family, the living room, whatever. So, yes.

**[00:24:38] INT: The- I could go in several directions here, but I suppose I’m going to ask you- talking about people’s living rooms, and it can be quite an intimidating thing, to go into people’s homes to do interviews. And I wondered if you had any advice for students, or advice that you would have given your younger self, when you were a social worker, about going into people’s homes.**

[00:25:17] RES: Well, yes. I suppose, when I was doing the research interviews, I had that- as you suggest, I had had that experience. Because in those days, social workers- even probation workers did home visits all the time. They don’t anymore. But I think I was always very conscious that- well, with research interviews particularly, you know, that they’re giving you something that you need, and that’s very generous of them. And there might be incentive payments, not always. But they never reflect to me, you know, the kind of, scale of the gift, if you like. So [interruption 00:26:03]

**[00:26:03] INT: It’s not quid pro quo, is it?**

[00:26:06] RES: Yes. Quite. It’s a kind of token really, just to recognise- a payment, it’s not like, you know, a proper reflection of labour. It’s a token of appreciation, I guess.

So, I would be conscious of the fact that, you know, you’re quite privileged, being invited into somebody’s home. And at the same time as sucking it all in, as I go in, you know- and this is why I think of interviews, even interviews as a form of ethnography, because I think you’re collecting data from the minute you make telephone contact with somebody or exchange an email with somebody to set up that interview. If you’re telephoning, you know, you’re hearing voice, inflection, accent, whatever. The minute you’re across the threshold- well, you pull up outside somebody’s house, you know, you’re kind of, absorbing an area, and then a house, and then a home.

So- and that’s all building a picture. That’s all data for me. Although it doesn’t often find its way into research reports. But it’s all data to me.

So, whilst you're kind of, you know, for me anyway, the antennae are going all the time, collecting visual, auditory whatever, data. You’re also, I think, needing to be quite polite. You know, it’s an encounter with a stranger, you know. So, ‘thanks so much for seeing me’, you know, ‘may I sit down? Where would it be best to sit? Are we okay in this room?’ You know, ‘I’m thinking we might need about an hour, is that okay with you?’ You know, and yes. So, honestly, I didn’t ever find it intimidating, going in somebody’s house.

**INT: No?**

So, I think those things that I’ve touched upon are just, kind of, good practice, really. I suppose, for some- for a young researcher who might find it intimidating. A, you can remind yourself that they’re probably far more scared than you are, because they don’t know what to expect. And they see you as in charge of this encounter. So, in terms of the power dynamics, they probably see the power as being in your hands. And the other thing is, I suppose it can be quite challenging to be doing all those things that I’ve just said, as well as having a topic guide, or an interview agenda, or whatever people call it these days, in front of you, with ground to cover [00:29:12] and managing that in as naturalistic- for me, it was always in as naturalistic and as conversational a way as possible. Because I never did questionnaire interviews. They were always very much semi structured and open, and exploratory, and wandering all over the place. Whilst at the same time, being very conscious that, you know, you’ve got this guide in front of you and you’ve got ground to cover, you know, specific ground to cover.

And so, until you feel a bit more skilled up in managing all of that at once, I think- and even when you’re more experienced, it’s perfectly acceptable to say to your interviewee or interviewees, because I’ve done joint as well as solo, you know, “Can we just pause there for a second, if you wouldn’t mind? For me to just look over the things I want to talk to you about.” And you know, don’t worry about doing that, and taking a moment out and collecting yourself, and consulting your guide.

And also, to kind of, take notes. Because as you’ve- or jottings- I mean, you’re recording these days usually, but I think it’s always a good idea to have, you know, a notepad and pen with you as well, and to make jottings. Because as you’ve demonstrated, particularly you’ve got somebody who is as [00:30:52*unclear* voluble] as I am at the moment, they’re going to say things that can take you off in all sorts of directions. And if you just jot things down, you can- you know, they might touch on something that comes much later on in your schedule and you want to pick up on it, but not right now. You want to pick up on it in a bit. So, if you just jot it down, make a little note to yourself, you can pick up on that in a more naturalistic way later. You know, you can say, ‘a bit ago, you said such and such. I wonder if you can expand on that’-

**[00:31:33] INT: Shall I give you an example, Jackie? I’ve jotted down, you know, you were talking about data, and ‘it’s all data to me and it doesn’t all make its way into the research reports’. But I was wondering from a practical perspective, because I am thinking about learners that are out there that are probably keenly listening to this for different reasons to other researchers, about, you know, ‘what can I learn?’ And the status of different types of data, and how you handled it, and where you put it, and has that changed over the years?**

[00:32:24] RES: Well, I don’t think the kind of- well, what could be called extraneous, or marginal stuff ever had any status in the early days. Now, I think, maybe there have been some changes in terms of applied research. Some recognition that if we want to design policy, or change practice in some way, we need to realise that experience is situated and contextual, and so perhaps we need to pay a bit more attention to context. And so, that means that the kinds of things that weren’t necessarily part of the original research question, or hadn’t been hypothesised but, you know, revealed themselves, become recognised as relevant data. So, I think that- you know, with things like the Nudge unit and behavioural economics perhaps leading the way on that. But sometimes, I think there’s stuff that it’s very hard to translate into relevant sort of, policy makers. I’m thinking of a project- I’ll just give you an example if we’ve got time.

**[00:34:05] INT: Yes.**

[00:34:07] RES: A project on problematic debt that I did, personal over indebtedness in low-income families. And I published a paper as a result of that, that I think policy makers would find quite difficult to just lift and turn into policy, but I think was extremely relevant. Because it was about the relationship between the couple and how couple dynamics- partner dynamics worked to sabotage efforts to get out of debt, or various reasons to do with the nature of the partners’ relationship. You know, personal relationship.

So, you know, one could lead the other into debt, despite the fact that they’d nominally had an agreement that they really needed to, you know, start getting out of debt.

**[00:35:17] INT: So, that wasn’t part of the original research intention then?**

[00:35:23] RES: No. It- well, the original was like, barriers and enhancers if you like. Or whatever the phrase was, to getting into and getting out of problematic debt. But because it was- the research design was interviewing individuals, that- and seeing it as an individual issue, there again you see, how you conceptualise something has a bearing on how you collect data, and then how you interpret findings. The fact that it happened during the fieldwork on a number of occasions that both partners were there and wanted to participate. And so, I could observe the dynamic between them, and other stuff came out that might not have- you never know, but that might not have come out in the individual interviews.

So, you know, there was interesting stuff about kind of, psychological bargaining between partners that ended up sabotaging it, as I say, best efforts. But how you then turn that into policy- well, that was never my job, I suppose. And I- yes. So, I did start managing to publish papers with that sort of stuff in it, and with the sort of stuff that earlier on, would never find- oh, are you still there?

**[00:37:17] INT: Yes. Yes.**

[00:37:18] RES: Okay, something just flashed up on my screen, so I’m going to get rid of it. That early on, you know, would have been regarded perhaps as irrelevant. But I started publishing stuff. And then, I think, there’s been a shift anyway within various disciplines towards valuing personal experience more. So, latterly, you know, I published autoethnographies because I’m not- you know, I don’t do, kind of, traditional fieldwork anymore. But I think that the fact that there’s a growing interest in things like autoethnography reflects, perhaps, a broader change in a recognition and a valuing of qualitative research and qualitative data more broadly.

I mean, when I did that MPhil, which was in the School of Ed at Nottingham, it was very quantitatively oriented and various members of staff would tease me unmercifully about doing qual stuff. It was like, ‘Oh, journalism!’. That’s what-

**[00:38:43] INT: Yes. I have had that question asked of me, yes.**

[00:38:46] RES: Yes. But I think that’s changed now and- yes. I mean, I did a project at one point looking at the role of gender within the grant application process of the ESRC, and went down to Swindon and, you know, did a kind of, content analysis of a pile of grants that came in. With the expectation, even at that point, that there would be some indirect or hidden bias against qual projects. But that wasn’t the case. That didn’t turn out to be the case.

**[00:39:30] INT: Going back to that- the debt project and, I don’t know if you can take yourself back there to that realisation. I want to kind of, illuminate for newer researchers that you’re there with one kind of particular purpose- well, not one purpose, but an overall purpose in mind. And you have this growing awareness that there’s something happening in front of you which could be really quite significant. What do you do with that data? For the student who’s never done it before. Are you writing it down? Are you going back and making notes later? Is it through the analytic process that you’re getting marginal notes that then start to become a fuller part of the analysis? Can you remember?**

[00:40:28] RES: Yes. Oh, yes. But although I’ve mentioned the value of having a notepad and pencil. That was really to ease the conduct of the interview itself because- yes, I’ve always audio recorded. So, yes. I mean, apart from the odd terrible, terrible technological failure when you’ve done a fantastic interview, and you’ve come out and found that you know, there’s been some, batteries ran out, or whatever. Which can happen to the best of us and it’s the worst feeling ever, and you just have to then, you know, sit- as soon as you realise it, sit and scribble everything that you can think of down in note form.

But I wasn’t- if things started to strike me, you know, as significant and, unanticipated things in an interview, I wasn’t writing notes about that, I would explore them in the interview, safe in the knowledge, touch wood, that it was being recorded. And it would be a kind of, decision about, well, I know I’ve got to cover this ground, this pre-agreed ground on my interview schedule. So, I’ve still got make sure I do that. But this is fascinating, and I think it’s significant, so I’m going to explore and expand that as well.

And for me, that was never problematic. That was a? bonus because that’s one of the major strengths of qualitative research. You know, that you- although I said with the education project, you know, we wanted to look for ways of enhancing parental involvement. And yes, the debt project is about barriers about, you know, routes into and out of, if you like- so, you- they’re not always, you know, you don’t always have clear hypotheses. They’re often exploratory projects, which makes it very difficult sometimes with funders- potential funders, you know, who might come back and say, ‘Well, this is a really underspecified project because you really just- it’s a fishing expedition, isn’t it? Where are your hypothesis?’ Whatever. It’s generally not [interruption 00:43:13]

**[00:43:13] INT: Anticipated outputs.**

[00:43:15] RES: Sorry?

**[00:43:16] INT: Anticipated outputs and outcomes.**

[00:43:18] RES: Yes. And all that. So, you know you're going to get them, and you know they’re going to be useful. But you don’t know beforehand what they’re going to be. And that’s one of the major strengths, really. So, I always saw that as a bonus if something really interesting came up. And I think good PI’s experienced qual- principal investigators- you know, would appreciate that, and you know, you come back to them with you know, ‘this looks like a really interesting thing that’s emerged’ and they’d be equally enthusiastic.

One thing I wanted to just comment on your question is, you know, you said something about the analytic phase. And for me, it’s all happening at the same time. So, the dynamic of a qualitative interview is, as I keep saying, yes, you’ve got a topic guide or whatever to follow, and pre-agreed ground to cover. But I’m always simultaneously asking questions and conducting the analysis and interpretation, all at the same time. It’s all part of the same process. So, I would often find myself saying things like, you know, giving feedback and saying- ‘what I heard you say there was this, would I be right in thinking that? And ‘can you say a bit more about that?’ ‘Oh, so does that mean this?’ You know, ‘do you mean that?’

So, you’re doing your analysis at the same time as asking the questions, really, for me. I think in text books and in perhaps, training- qual research training as well, there’s- and I suppose I’ve done it here as well, there’s a lot of focus on data collection methods, i.e., for me, interviewing and ethnography. There’s far less on analysis and interpretation, methods of-

**[00:45:45] INT: Yes. I agree with you. And I think that’s why I was keen to introduce that motion of the analysis. Where it happens, and what are you doing when you are analysing?**

[00:46:02] RES: Well, again, that’s changed- I mean, you asked about change, you know, that I’ve experienced. Like I said, I just made it up as I went along in the beginning. I didn’t know what I was doing really. And then, grounded theory became very popular, and we all talked about emerging themes, and exhausting categories, and all of that. But nobody was really doing it very systematically, I don’t think. Then thematic analysis, you know, everybody does thematic analysis.

**[00:46:37] INT: An easy start.**

[00:46:40] RES: And then there’s framework analysis. And there’s ‘longitudinal qualitative’. And I think they’re all great. Oh, and yes, and god, yes, NVivo. You mentioned NVivo. When that first- well, it was Nudist, to begin with. And then NVivo. So, I did use nudist on one project. And then I went on a training course for NVivo. And then I just thanked the lord that after that, most of the data sets I was, you know- they were all small numbers of cases in projects I worked on. And so, I reverted to manual, basically. With lots of- I remember doing one with framework analysis, and there's probably wonderful software packages for that now. But I was working from home at the time, and I had a study with like, massive charts and post-it notes all over every wall. And that was my framework analysis.

So, I never conquered, really, software packages to the point of doing all the things that- the very, very fancy things that they’re capable of. And I think lots of people who use them only use them as data organisers. And that’s fine. But that’s what they are. It’s still up to you, the researcher, to interpret findings.

**[00:48:31] INT: Yes. Rubbish in, rubbish out. Is my favourite phrase with these things. Yes.**

[00:48:36] RES: Exactly. Rubbish in, rubbish out. Yes.

**[00:48:38] INT: It won’t do it for you.**

[00:48:40] RES: No, it won’t do it for you. Yes.

**[00:48:43] INT: Well, we’re running short on time, and I wanted to ask you if there was anything in particular that you wanted to say or have heard through this piece of work that- well, we’re all doing together really. But-**

[00:49:06] RES: I don’t know. Just that I still love it, actually, and I find it fascinating. Endlessly fascinating. I have pulled out- I did pull out some- because I still- even though I only do bits and pieces now, I still try and, you know, read stuff. And I have pulled out some resources in case you were interested in them.

**[00:49:41] INT: Ooh, Jackie, it would be foolish to go, ‘oh, no thank you’ or not following up. Oh, yes please.**

[00:49:47] RES: Well, one on framework analysis. One on thematic analysis. And one on quali longitudinal, which- by Bren Neale. I don’t know whether you know Bren Neale. No.

**[00:50:01] INT: It’s not leaping out into my memory. No.**

[00:50:04] RES: No. Fantastic paper. Fantastic paper about qualitative research. And in this case, longitudinal quali. But in discussing it, it highlights, I think really well, some of the fantastic advantages of qualitative research. And notions like causality. I think one of the things- sorry, I think one of- I’ve just thought. Thinking about causality. One of the things I would like to say to younger qual researchers is- and I would sort of say to my younger self, although I think I nearly always did do this, is resist the pressures to talk about big numbers. You know. ‘Well, yes, we did a hundred interviews’. Well, why is that better than 40? You know, often the pressure is to you know, adopt quasi quantitative notions, and paradigms, and philosophies. I think there’s still a battle in some quarters, depending who you- talking to, who you’re delivering your result to, what kind of forum. I mean, I do remember delivering a presentation on a fantastic qual project on health to a bunch of medics, who- the first question was, you know, ‘why didn’t you do an RCT?’ You know, a randomised controlled trial. So, you still do get complete mismatches and pressures to, as I say to adopt those- yes.

But this article by Bren Neale, I think really uncovers some of the- in talking about causality, for example, it’s not a kind of, A plus B equals C. She talks about it as a relational phenomenon.

**[00:52:15] INT: Yes. That’s that kind of recursive, rather than linear relationship between things, isn’t it?**

[00:52:21] RES: Yes. Yes, exactly. Yes. And the fluidity and dynamism of it all. So, I mean, I’m perfectly happy if you think it would be useful to send you those.

**[00:52:31] INT: Yes. Yes. We can- I can- you know, whether we attach them- where we make sure that people have got access to them, or at least the reference, that would be great to have. Thank you, Jackie.**

**As an example of numbers- I hate to do this. But what was the smallest data set, do you think? That you’ve worked on.**

[00:52:57] RES: 20.

**[00:53:00] INT: Thank you. It’s nice to hear the, you know, bang.**

[00:53:05] RES: I think more- I think, you know, ball park. Bearing in mind, you know, I’ve been out of for a few years as a full-timer. But ball park, kind of, norm, I think was maybe 40. You know, seen as respectable and acceptable to funders and what have you. And that’s still just about manageable if you want to do- you know, if you don’t want to use software. If you want to, kind of, immerse yourself in it and-

**[00:53:40] INT: That would be different for a doctorate.**

[00:53:44] RES: Yes. Yes, it would. Yes, that’s right. I think small *n* is seen as more acceptable for doctorates. Because I suppose they might be seen as, in some sense, a pilot project. You know, an apprenticeship project, aren’t they?

**[00:54:00] INT: Yes. I think, yes, I have 11, I think. And that was acceptable.**

[00:54:08] RES: It depends so much on what it is you’re enquiring about, doesn’t it?

**[00:54:14] INT: It does. It does. Data saturation type things that we were talking about.**

**And do you mind answering one more question?**

[00:54:23] RES: No. Not at all. No.

**[00:54:25] INT: What’s your favourite thing about qualitative research?**

[00:54:32] RES: Yes. I find it’s- I find that so difficult. Can I have two? It will be- it’ll be the face-to-face interaction. Yes. It’ll be the face-to-face interaction, I’m sure, first. But the writing- you know, the last- the end of the process. I love writing and shaping, you know, the outcome into something with a story and making it accessible.

**[00:55:20] INT: I’m so glad I asked that question. Thank you, Jackie. I’m going to turn off the recording now. We have some admin to go through. Great, thank you.**

[00:55:36] RES: Will I just email you these-

**[00:55:40] INT: If- we’ll keep talking to each other, but we’ll talk about that kind of thing.**

[00:55:46] RES: Okay.

**[00:55:47] INT: Yes. But I’m stopping the recording now.**

**[Audio ends: 00:55:51]**