2 Caroline Transcript Summary

0.01 (4 First qual) I wonder if you can remember the kind of first time you learnt about qualitative methods or qualitative techniques?

Caroline trained as a scientist and then as a science teacher and was introduced to social sciences generally and qualitative methods in particular. Her PGCE dissertation was mixed methods; a questionnaire followed by interviews. She can't remember if she was taught, but remembers that she became more interested in the qualitative as she realised that the scientific method missed out on the subjective position. Learning to become a teacher involves understanding the subjective position of the student, so the whole paradigm rather than the just method is important.

3.10 (Becoming, 4 First qual, 19, 20, 21 Common paradigm) Did the valuing of the paradigm arise from noticing something in the qualitative data?

No, it arose from a need to examine and understand her subjective experience in becoming a teacher; to handle her private identity as a lesbian, with her public identity as a teacher, at a time in the 90s when to be openly gay as a teacher was extremely difficult. How she would handle that public/private identity was bothering her and she wanted to know how others were handling it and how others perceived homosexuality in school. All the teachers received a questionnaire and an invitation to discuss things, and some did. So the piece became about hard perceptions, stories from teachers who actually closeted at that school, and Caroline's position on how she would operate in her new public profession.

06.41 (4 First qual, Trust) Those were some of your first qual interviews, speaking to closeted teachers, how did that go?

Caroline says that they were keen to talk to her. The opportunity to talk to someone. They seemed to trust her. They had known her for more than a term and seen her operate, but she doesn't recall anything specific about her research process that would have built trust specifically. She wonders if it was it was sheer desperation to talk, or perhaps her use of coded language that marked her as an insider with them.

09.28 (2 Type) Was this your first piece of social research?

Definitely. She says her previous (science) research wasn't very good and she just wasn't interested in the scientific style of finding out.

10.29 (2 Type, 22 Things changed) Do you think that's something that's changed?

Caroline thinks it depends on the question you want to ask. There is value to the hypothesise and test method, but she thinks it quite narrow and statistical analysis doesn't interest her.

11.08 (2 Type, 24 Do differently) You said your research wasn't very good. Were there any things you'd do differently?

She found measuring seedlings boring and she wasn't very robust in thinking about the data. Thinking about numbers didn't float her boat.

12.13 (Identity) Were you training to become an educator or a researcher in your PGCE?

Definitely an educator.

12.43 (Career choices) Did you go on and do qualitative research after that?

Not straight away. Whilst teaching, she did a taught Masters very focused on qualitative branches of psychology, rather than positivistic theories, with a research dissertation.

15.22 (Identity, Reflexivity) So at that stage you are still thinking of yourself as an educator? And the research is a feedback mechanism to improve your teaching?

For Caroline the research aspect comes from the subjective position of how to become a better teacher and how can the context be made better for others. She thinks teachers and educators often do that kind of research and often mixed method. She has been brought in on bigger mixed methods projects to do the qualitative work.

17.13 (Reflexivity, Role purpose) You mentioned reflexivity a lot. How would you describe reflexivity? Is this reflected in what you teach?

Caroline summarises it as the flip-flopping between the subjective and objective positions in relation to reflecting on behaviour and making decisions. Caroline always does a SWAT analysis after teaching to facilitate reflection and CPD.

22.50 (7 Teaching, 9 Who) How would you describe what you teach?

General qualitative methodology, and practice of research, aimed at doctoral researchers and ECRS, often from clinical backgrounds, and starting to engage in qualitative research.

22.38 (14 Students difficult, 19, 20, 21 Common Paradigm) That sounds like a common journey, I think, and one you went through. How do people respond? What issues do they have?

Caroline doesn't present qualitative research in opposition to the scientific method, even if many of them have been taught to see it that way. Many are uncomfortable if they have been asked or told to do qualitative research. Acknowledging the value of science and the RCTs creates a willingness to open their mind.

25.49 (2 Type, 28 Voice)

She is clear about what she believes but is not attempting to convince them to share her beliefs; the must reach their own conclusions about the methodologies. It comes down to what's best for the research question. And some of them are there because they have realised that positivistic research will only take them so far, or leaves spaces in between where questions are not being asked.

27.28 (22 Things changed, Paradigm shift) Have you seen any changes over the years; are people more open or closed to qualitative research.

The response in class is overwhelmingly positive, especially from those who are experienced positivistic researchers, who exclaim over the robustness of the processes, and the epistemology behind it.

29.27 (Paradigm shift) What does this 'robust' mean and why is that so important to those coming from a positivistic background?

Having clear processes that can be tracked back is very important to them, and records of what was done/not done and why. Not necessarily replicable, but if you've changed something you have a record of the subjective context which led to them. Science is presented as though that hasn't happened, and many of have reached the conclusion that their science isn't statistically invalidated because of it, but it is not the complete picture. The realise that there are standard ways to talk about all of the evidence, and they value that.

32.19 (Paradigm shift) Do you think students take something back from these paradigms even when they are doing very quantitative research?

Caroline thinks they do but wonders how long it lasts. Even if it doesn't change their practice they often say they will never look at qualitative research in same way again, or will have a better idea of what good qualitative research looks like in future.

33.49 (14 Students difficult) What kinds of things do people struggle with?

The language. They have do some deep philosophical stuff on one of their courses, and they use phrases like 'my head is exploding'. Caroline gives them simple language with which to understand qualitative research so that when they do their reading, they can grasp a little more and make more considered decisions about their research. They are the ones doing the PhD and they will have to defend themselves, rather than do like Caroline would do it.

36.08 (23 You changed) How has your approach changed to how you teach or explain these things?

Caroline says she is better at letting them explain to each-other, and using fewer words to explain things. The examples used in the early days are still similar, but she has more from hearing others. She values the knowledge in the room more, and is at pains to point that out because many come from cultures where what the teachers says, goes.

37.58 (22 Things changed) Do you get a sense of how the perception of qualitative research has changed?

She gets a lot more people doing mixed methods, more clinicians and engineers. She can't decide if more people are doing mixed methods in preference to qualitative methods, or people doing mixed methods in preference to a purely quantitative approach. The factors are multiple, including if she wasn't providing the training, then she wouldn't hear them. The training she give is not mandatory in most cases; it's elective. There are times when she has to put on more courses to meet demand and others when it's not so popular.

41.46 (22 Things changed, 19, 20,21 Common Paradigm) A lot of people come from health backgrounds on your course. Do you think attitudes have changed within health over the years you've been teaching it?

Caroline thinks there are cycles, short (5 years) and generational, but that health research is more participant focused than it was 20 years ago because of the realisation that 'You can't just tell people to take their tablets and they'll do it'. Also, a lot of people from overseas used to say they were doing mixed methods to give the PhD credibility than purely qualitative would lack. Those kinds of

statements are less common. She sees more and more people doing mixed methods who, perhaps, 10 years ago would have just done stats, doing mixed methods, either because they are interested in qual or because they are being encouraged to have something else as well. It can seem a little derogatory to qualitative research, but she thinks it a journey that the whole of research is on, asking, how do we get better at meeting the needs of our society?

44.53 (Role purpose) How would you describe your professional identity now?

Caroline says that she doesn't do much research at the moment, but people interpret what she does as research, but she is an educator, and believes those that know her, know how highly she values that identity.

45.31 (23 You changed) That sounds like how you started out on this journey. How do you think your identity has changed over that time?

Caroline talks to a lot of academics who don't see themselves as educators. In research-intensive universities teaching is not valued. The reach their academic positions because of their research, and then have to teach with no formal background as educators. They feel uncomfortable. Caroline is the opposite; despite forma training in being a researcher, it's not her identity, or 'way of being'.

46.58 (11 Enjoy teaching) What's your favourite part of teaching?

Literally the moment when you see the light bulb go on over their head, regardless of subject. Generating meaning for each student.

47.53 (7,8 Teaching) Have you been doing more online teaching recently? Do you get to see the 'A-ha' moment?

Yes, she is doing more online teaching, and seeing that moment is harder. Teaching of content is often compressed, so it's not the same kind of teaching. Information is given, processes are started but they have to go away and finish the process themselves. People express thanks but it's not the same as being in the room.

49.45 (11 Enjoy teaching) Has that been less satisfying?

The satisfaction has come from the design, in maximising things for engagement in learning, not just a broadcast.

50.53 (11 Enjoy teaching) Do you have a favourite method or technique to teach?

Caroline enjoys teaching coding using a simple approach to data-generated codes and theory generated codes. One half has to generate codes from a transcript and the other has to apply apriori codes to the same transcript. Then they compare and contrast what they did, and what they got. Before the exercise, many don't understand the difference and what it would mean for their own research, but they do by the end, and can make decisions about their own research. She feels very proud of that task design and seeing the students learn from it.

53.23 (7, 8 Teaching, 14 Students difficult) Has anyone come up with completely crazy or unexpected codes or themes?

Very occasionally, but mostly she sees the same kinds of things emerging. But they realise, as they look at the transcript how messy difficult transcription can be. People ask if they should do the transcription themselves or pay someone, in order to save time. But Caroline thinks that this is their

apprenticeship for learning those things and understand what they are losing if they don't do the transcription themselves, or choose a particular type.

55.30 (28 Voice) Was there anything you wanted to talk about or add?

Caroline wanted to talk about interviewing and how she learnt during her PhD to interview; through the PhD and lots of smaller projects.

56.12 (5 Learnt, 22 Things changed) What did you learn?

Her first few projects had no audio recordings, just field notes. She comments that that is rare now, but that was just common and acceptable then. Some supervisors might never have taken tape machines into the field; they were expensive.

57.48 (6 Approach favourite, Trust) Has that robustness improved the perception of qualitative research?

Caroline has mixed feelings, claiming that just because you've transcribed an audio, it won't save you from skipping lightly across the surface during transcription or analysis. Paying attention to the story, the narrative. The story can be told through the narrator, the note-taker and you don't necessarily need an audio record. Humans create meaning and pass on how we feel through stories, not fact.

1.00.01 (Becoming) Is that something you've got better at?

Caroline needs to think and concludes that when she started, she had a narrow world and hers was story-telling, but that expanded as she was exposed to more information, and she became less certain, even feeling incompetent. (This part of a recognised learning cycle). She feels she has made her way back to wanting to wanting to value the whole story, but having knowledge of other approaches should the research require it.

1.03 (27 Advice, Researching) How do tell a good story from a research point view?

Caroline hoped that she wouldn't be asked. But she thinks one needs to consider what the listener is interested in, and what's the point of the story. Humour is important to her, but it is her preferred way to engage. She refers back to early ethnography and the insight into other lives; a good story contains the mundane and recognisable with themes that are common about how people live their lives.