

Amrit Baines transcript

I: Okay, so could you start, Amrit, just by telling me a little bit about your university degree programme, your degree course, and when you finished?

R: So I started the University of Birmingham in 2013. I selected Business Management with a year in industry and I was quite specific about that year in industry because I know just how invaluable that work experience is further down the line. So in my third year I managed to complete a one year placement, an industrial placement, with a local firm who I believe were a manufacturer in the lock-making industry, which is quite a niche industry to say the least, but it was certainly a great experience. And then obviously I completed my fourth year just recently, most of my modules were surrounding economics and finance; however there was this dissertation module as well, which to be honest with you was probably my most enjoyable module, yeah.

I: So, did you draw on your experience of the year industry in thinking about what you were going to do in your research project, was there any link there?

R: Partly, yeah, to be honest with you my initial choice of topic, it quite a personal decision, it was based on experiences of people that were close to me. But when I draw in the work element side of it, I am aware how working in, not only retail, but in industry and various other, industries can be quite daunting at times and you sometimes you can feel like you're trying to be a person that you're not just to fit in maybe, or the type of work that you are doing is quite daunting and that can kind of lead sporadically to feelings of... you know... it starts off as very, I don't want to say paranoia, but you know maybe anxiety, maybe stress, but a lot of the time people don't know what that can spiral into, and those are the kind of boundaries I wanted to explore in this project.

I: Right and you said there were some personal reasons; it's one of the things we explore in the book, where you get your ideas from.

R: Yeah

I: Are you able to tell me a little bit more about that?

R: Yeah, it's just people I've worked with before, friends, family friends, who I know have experienced feelings of sometimes loneliness, or anxiety, or stress and because it's so common and because, you know, after university much of our life is dedicated to work you know you can't help but feel for them, they feel trapped, and they kind of need that person to go to. I really wanted to explore why, firstly, why what causes them to feel like this, is it the nature of the work, is it a personal trait? And then secondly, what's being done to deal with it— so does the organization they work in help? Are there ways that they can help themselves, feel more comfortable in themselves and you know. So it was a lot of unanswered questions for me, and I saw a big crossover between mental health and working. And like I say, that was the, kind of the, trigger for me to explore this topic.

I: So how did you get from your interest to the actual sort of research question you were intending to focus on?

R: With great difficulty, initially, to be honest with you. I knew that I wanted to explore that area, but kind of refining that into one single topic, it was quite difficult and a lot of that I do thank my dissertation supervisor for. I remember when we walked into that first lecture of the year, that dissertation lecture we were pretty much told that dissertations can either be primary or secondary research. But for me, you know, conducting both of those would have been a slight issue. Primary, on the basis that it is quite a sensitive issue and I just questioned how many people would come forward and talk about their experiences; and secondary because I don't think it would really have helped answer what I wanted to know, you know I wanted to explore the depth behind it, and I think that would've been really difficult with secondary, with a secondary-type dissertation. So that's when I spoke to my dissertation supervisor and she said that 'I think a systematic literature review would be the best way to go about doing this' and to be honest with you at the time I was quite clueless because not a lot of what we were told in our dissertation lectures focused on systematic lit reviews. I think in the previous year hardly anyone, maybe one or two, chose to do their dissertation in that kind of way. We also got given example dissertations and all the examples that I went through, hardly any of them did a systematic literature review and the one or two that did, my supervisor advised me that that isn't really the most accurate way of doing it. So from that moment onwards I kind of, I was all ears and I was willing to hear what she said and I was happy for her to kind of take this topic, a broad topic into a direction that she thought was most appropriate. So she helped me refine mental health as a big bubble more specifically into the cause and effects in the workplace.

I: And tell me a bit about what a systematic literature review actually enables— what attracted you to that particular tool, what's useful about it?

R: For me, it was that whole systematic nature, you know. I'm very robust in my thinking, in the way I execute things, I always want to see you know that kind of what that stage 1, 2, 3, 4 plan, and go along with that plan. I felt that if I was to do the primary or secondary it might be all over the place, but well my supervisor just told me exactly how the systematic literature review works. Much of it was a filtering process, so she said you know you've got your search terms, you've got the broader idea and it's just a case of narrowing that down one by one into to a three stage, four stage or five stage process and getting down to that literature that completely focuses on the area you want. Once you've got that literature that matches your search criteria, you explore that literature to the depth, and see just how much of your research question does it really answer. Clearly if it answers a lot of your research question, then there is sufficient working into the topic of mental health in the workplace; on the other hand if I felt that the literature that I chose, even after meeting the search criteria, it still didn't answer my research question then clearly there is a big gap in the field of mental health in the workplace, and that's exactly what this dissertation found.

I: Okay, and clearly you feel quite passionately about this topic, and once you've actually done the systematic literature review is there a sense in your mind as to what the purpose or the value of that is, in terms of a practical... [*inaudible interruption from respondent*]

R: Well sure. Sorry could you repeat that last bit?

I: A practical or, you know, any use that could come out of it?

R: Yeah for sure, so you know when I was doing this dissertation I didn't want it to be something I kind of breeze through and say I'm done, I thought to myself you know it's such a sensitive and important issue, that if it can contribute to a kind of wider society or if it could even feature in some kind of publicity or something like this, you know I never really expected it to get this far, but it has been recognised from various sources, and that in itself I think is an achievement. When I was conducting the dissertation itself I did have that at the back of my head, I thought, you know, try and explore areas that you think are, you know maybe not controversial as such but that are, are unspoken truths in the workplace almost. That was kind of my aim in doing this, I tried to make a conscious effort and say things that others maybe too afraid to say or aren't really acknowledged for sure. For example, when I did split the actual, I mean I've got it with me here, when I did split the cause of mental health in the workplace, I split it into personal and organizational, and by that I mean is what traits does the individual have, what might they have been born with for example whether it's their gender, whether it's their sociological surroundings, their upbringing— could that hinder you know their mental wellbeing in the workplace. And then I asked the same question from the organisational side of things, what environmental factors is the individual exposed to in the workplace which may make them more prone to mental health issues than say other individuals. And then going back to your systematic question as well I think that in itself, being so detailed, so specific in what I was looking for it made sure that I was on the right path to my research question, and ultimately my research question was to explore to what extent mental health literature looks at the causes and the consequences of mental health in the workplace. So in effect I was almost answering two questions. But yeah as I say, that systematic procedure definitely helped me stay on the right path and make sure my dissertation was relevant.

I: And you mentioned that it has been recognised and the importance of that to you. Can you tell me a bit more about that how have you achieved impact through doing this piece of research?

R: Well after I found out just how highly I managed to score on my dissertation, I was quite over the moon and I thought you know well if this is being recognised as such a high-quality piece by a lecturer who, you know, she has such an incredible reputation for what she does and if she thinks it's a good-quality piece of work then it must be. So from that moment onwards I was quite, you know, I usually up until this point stay quite muted about my achievements, but this is something I kind of posted over social media saying you know this is a topic that has been quite close to my heart, and I have done well in it. And from that I had various sources, I had random people asking me do you mind sending me a copy so I can read it, and I then approached a student magazine who every month they have different issues they focus on, and one month they chose mental health and they asked students to fill out a questionnaire. This went onwards and I thought this might be a great opportunity for me to approach them and say, look I've got a piece—would you mind, you know, looking at it and see how you feel, and they ended up publishing a small summary of my dissertation. I

used to be a writer for a website called the Market Mogul, and on there I've got one article that's dedicated to mental health in the workplace as well. That was written before this dissertation, so the two kind of tie in together and I think a lot of people, when they see that professional side of me, they know that part of that professional side is dedicated to this topic. So I feel like in that respect it is something I've become recognised for, online anyway, and if that can spiral into bigger things in the near future you know, if it's something that...I feel like there's definitely space for me to specialise in this area you know, a few years down the line for sure.

I: That's really interesting, and I think online is a really effective way of getting that message out there and you've already done that and I'm sure you will carry on, so good luck with that. In terms of the literatures that you were engaging with, it sounds like they were quite different from your economics and finance modules. What kind of literatures were you reviewing, and did you feel able to engage with them all?

R: So the way that my dissertation supervisor said to go about this, she recommended an online database which was full of articles and academic journals. She basically said to pick some key search terms—this was stage one of the protocol, stage one was to derive some key search terms which she thought would help me find relevant articles.

I: Can you give me some examples of those?

R: Yeah, I've got seven sets of key search terms here. I think the importance was... a lot of the key search terms were the same, but for me conduct a rigorous you know search, I used similar key search terms but in different combinations for example:

Employee mental health, employee mental illness, employee workplace anxiety, employee mental burnout, mental health workplace, employee workplace stress, and workplace depression.

So they are all very similar terms, they are quite overlapping and that was the primary purpose I chose those terms, because I wanted to be sure they were relevant, that the texts were completely relevant. So once I entered all those combinations into the database, I had a total of 6886 articles, and obviously you know I'm not going to sit there and read and every one of them. So the beauty of that systematic literature review was to have a more rigorous process to filter through these. So after this I trimmed it down to English language, so that everything I read was in my first language and I completely understood what they were saying. After that I applied a category—now this was probably one of the most important parts of the literature review, because my dissertation was specifically around the workplace, and my research question was specifically around business and management literature, so, you know, if I was to go into a psychology database, I am more than likely to find entries on mental health, because this is what psychology is all about, but when I say to you, 'Business and Management literature,' I assume that it is not the first thing people usually think about, the mental health of people in the workplace. So I specifically applied the business or management category filter to see just how many business- and management-related journals cover mental health. From 6000, that left me with 500 articles, so that, I think, in itself says a lot; it says that there is still literature out there, but the primary focus isn't exactly

mental health in the... you know which I... some people might say why should it be business and management—you think HR, you think finance, you think, you know, marketing and whatnot; you wouldn't think mental health. But again I wanted to penetrate that further and ask why? Because we spend all our days in the business environment, why isn't there more business and management texts surrounding mental health? So after that I did the duplicate removal stage, to remove overlapping articles, of course—when you've got all those combinations of similar words you're going to have the same articles pop up, so I managed to get rid of the duplicates. So at that point I was left with 495 articles, so this is where the reading kicked in. So I visually scanned all 495 articles. I first looked at their title, then I looked at their abstract; from that I kind of managed to gauge whether they were relevant to my research question, and that left me with 139 articles. So before I started my dissertation, my supervisor, Natalia, told me to have the aim of 50-100 articles to review which I was more than happy with. So after these 139 articles I then did a source review, so again that boils down to making sure they were from a Business and Management journal, not, say, from Journal of Psychology or something like that. I mean they may have been relevant if they did come from that source, so I didn't completely exclude them, but the main thing for me was to stay relevant within my research topic, which was why I chose business and management related sources, the Journal of Management say, for example, and that left me with 83 articles. Then the final stage of the screening—as you can tell from this interview it was a very robust screening process, I believe it was 4-5 stages altogether— but the final stage was a full-text screening and that literally I just went through every article and read them back to front. I digested them, and this must have taken me probably a good 2 months, I would probably say. Number 1, I was balancing other modules; number 2, I was applying for graduate schemes; number 3 is because I thought, you know, at this point you put so much heart and soul into the methodology process, just to go from 6000 to now 83, I didn't want these articles to just be picked willy-nilly, so I made sure I really digested the articles, and I made notes on the articles and highlighted key areas that could be of relevance, and I ended up coming to 50 articles. These 50 articles are, number one, very different from each other, number two, they do contribute to the research area— some of them will look at personal causes, why is the individual... what makes them more susceptible to illness in the workplace; some will look at the organisation, what is it about the firm, their surroundings, the people they hire, their work culture, that makes the individuals feel like this; and the other side of the spectrum was the consequences so how many of these articles look at what happens to the individual, is their performance in the workplace hindered? Again, what happens to the organisation? Does it affect their service, does it affect their ability to profit, for example? But then one area where I thought this dissertation could now offer some real value was to see how many of these articles offer prevention strategies and I think that was the main taking point for my research, is how many of these articles really offer robust ways in which the individual or the firm can help. The final outcome was: not many— in a nutshell, that was how I managed to get my articles and how I managed to split the literature.

I: What would you say the main patterns were that you were finding? So at the point where you get to actually analysing these articles, what were they concentrating on and where were the gaps? You've mentioned one.

R: Once I had these 50 articles, I looked for the key themes, and tried to see whether those key themes did fit in with my research question. I'm not sure if you can see, this 4x4 here, can you see it in the shot there? [*rustling of paper as respondent shows diagram on Skype call*]

I: I can, yeah.

R: This 4x4 here was perhaps the most important way for me to carry out this dissertation, because it enabled me to have a very structured approach.

I: How did you come up with the 4x4?

R: I'm not sure how much of it you can see but I'll just point here. So on the vertical axis you've got individual and organisation, so again that focuses on how much of the articles focuses on the individual and how much of the articles focuses on the firm. And then along the bottom on the horizontal axis you have the cause, so what percentage of the articles I've selected look at the cause of mental health, and then on the other side you've got what percentage of the articles look at how the individual or the organisation can help prevent or cope with mental health in the workplace. So I thought this 4x4 was a fantastic way of, you know, categorising my literature, and all 50 articles, they would easily have been placed...there is no real middle ground as you can see, they all had a focus. And as you can see most of the cluster is in this bottom left of the spectrum, so I concluded, in a nutshell, I concluded that most of the literature that I had chosen focused on causes of mental health as a result of organisational surroundings. And before I conducted my dissertation, my research, I predicted that the abundance of literature would perhaps be in that area. I also predicted that not many articles would look at how individuals or firms can help cope with mental illness, and the reason I predicted that was based on personal experience. As I've said I've worked in retail, I've worked for professional firms, and you often see when you know you have your HR inductions or training, you often see a lot of helplines, in your contract, or see a lot of emphasis on physical injury, what to do in case there is a physical injury but, you know, mental injury is probably just as common if not more common, yet it's not spoken, and I kind of predicted that going into this body of research that there would not be much focus on how individuals and organisations can help prevent and cope with mental illness. And boy was I right, because I only found two articles out of the fifty that really focused on that and once I made that discovery at that moment onwards I thought 'you're really onto something here, you made a prediction and you've got in bang on, now you just need to explore why. Why is it unspoken?' And for those articles that do focus on how individuals can prevent mental illness what exactly do they say, and could they say more? And from that moment onwards I kind of went along with that theme, that was the main theme of my dissertation: I've found what's unexplored and now can I find why is it unexplored?

I: And where you able to answer that question?

R: To be honest with you, with great difficulty. If I just fast forward to that quadrant now, to individual coping strategies. So what I did find was that the literature that focuses on individual coping strategies, that is how the employee can cope with their own mental health.

A lot focused on self-directed learning and to me that didn't really...it was very ambiguous. To be honest with you, I didn't really understand it. Both the articles, they both focused on self-directed learning, but there was no real emphasis on how self-directed learning could come about, you know. If I'm an individual in a work place and I've discovered that something isn't right up here, these articles suggested that the optimal way of me dealing with that would be to kind of to keep the feelings buried within myself and learn how to deal with that, and to me that wasn't really much of a solution. In theory it might...but in practical it's not, only the individual...you know they're battling with their own mind. And so for me there was a lot of ambiguity around that bit, and the only conclusion that I can, you know, really gauge at that...because no one knows how to deal with it. There is still this kind of stigma, as cliché as it sounds, no one really wants to admit when it's happening. But I also think that, that is because we don't know what's happening, and again that is something I've managed to say in this dissertation, that there is a lot of ambiguity over what is mental health, you know. Before going into this body of research I wouldn't have maybe called stress a trigger of mental health, but it is. And you know, at some point in our lives we're going to be stressed with work and in a way that is a form of mental illness and it is just about how we deal with that stress, and there isn't much literature, there isn't much support from the outside organisations, not at least not from the one's I've worked with that help cope with stress and that isn't me, you know, criticising the firms I've worked with in the past it's just me acknowledging how they probably don't know how to deal with stress, and it's just something that we all take for granted, you know, if a friend of mine, you know, if he was stressed with work just you know you might just have to bite the bullet, it's part and parcel of the job; but you know, just how much of that exposure to stress is dangerous for us. That's something that you know, is quite difficult to quantify.

I: And do you think, I mean obviously in your quadrant you've got organisational causes as the most populated...

R: Yeah

I:...area and yet it sounds like in terms of prevention there isn't as much going on at the organisational level, it's more individual...

R: Precisely

I: ...responsibility, yeah. So in a sense, is that something you felt you were able to argue in your dissertation?

R: For sure. The organisation, if I go back to the quadrant for you. If we just, not looking at the bottom, just looking at the top bit of the individual and the organisation, as you can tell, most of the focus is on the organisation, regardless of what it's actually talking about, rather than the individual. And so I, sort of, looked at the organisation side of it as well and I thought, ok, why is there more of a focus on the organisation. And I think that is, again, partly because it's easier to quantify. So when I looked at these articles... bear with me... so when I looked at the articles, what I then did was I made a list of the article I found, the author etc., and then I just discussed the key themes. For example, for this quadrant, quadrant three, where I spoke about the individual causes, I looked at what causes I recognised. And now,

going through these causes—role conflict, excessive workload, role overload, low-skill utilisation—a lot of those are quite easy to quantify— excessive work shift cover, customer aggression, patient aggression if you're working in the NHS—you know you can quantify that easily. You can conduct staff surveys, or external surveys or interviews with employees and see how much work they're taking on. So looking at the organisational side of things, I think it is definitely a lot more easy to quantify, but when you look at the individual side of things, how do you say to an individual just how much stress are you feeling or why are you feeling this stressed, you know, that is the great difficulty with this.

I: Are you able to say anything about what kind of research, then, needs to be done in the future? What research methods, or, you know, you've mentioned that things tend to be measured that are easy to quantify. What kind of research would you say is needed?

R: It is a difficult question to answer, Emma, because going back to the whole, you know, as I've said mental health it is about a battle with your own brain, and only you truly know what is going on up there. In terms of analysing the personal traits that may make individuals more prone to mental illness, I think that perhaps it is more important to have more studies that look at demographics, maybe areas that are perhaps more run down. So if an individual comes from a working-class area, or from poverty, are they more likely to feel, have feelings of mental ill-health, as opposed to someone who is born in a more wealthy family, say. There was a few studies on gender, but they didn't really answer a lot of questions. So I think gender is important, you know, is male mental health... are males more susceptible to mental health than females? What is it in their, not DNA as such, but what is it in their... in the way they're brought up. I think maybe observing family structures, family constructs as well. Ethnicities, you know, is Asian mental illness more common or more uncommon than Caucasian mental illness? I think there are a lot of areas where you can certainly look at and find... maybe you do find patterns or maybe you don't, but I think not until those kind of bodies of research are conducted you won't really know what makes individuals more susceptible to mental illness than others. As far as the prevention side of things goes I think that's where the greater difficulty lies. I think it's quite difficult to tell individuals how they should cope with their mental illness. Self-directed learning did come up a few times, whereby it suggested only the individual can really help themselves. How you would go about discovering methods where the individual can cope, to be honest with you, I'm not too sure, it is a very grey area.

I: Tell me a little bit about how you went about writing up your dissertation, the process. In particular how you got to the point of your diagrammatic representations.

R: My supervisor showed me a couple of systematic literature reviews, you know, she helped conduct in the past, and one of them really helped my structure in terms of that four-stage screening process, let me just get that out as well. This tree diagram here, that was a similar to one shown to me in a previous student's work, and I thought that was a really effective way of me kind of summarising and going about my own, you know conducting, getting those 50 sources myself. In terms of that 4x4 quadrant, it was something that to be honest with you just came out the blue for me. Natalia certainly said that you should conduct some kind of diagram, a 2x2 diagram with the axis, and she said that would certainly help to

structure my dissertation a lot more, but this whole kind of quadrant bubble thing, this is something that I kind of just came up with myself. I think the reason I had that was those 50 articles they were the four core themes that they all looked at and that just made it a lot easier. And again, I think the fact that I stayed relevant, as I say to you the fact that I managed to maintain a mentality whereby I wanted to ensure all the articles I chose were completely relevant to the research topic and had some sort of overlying relevance, that definitely helped me place those 50 articles on the 4x4 with greater ease.

I: Tell me a bit about your relationship with your supervisor. How did you negotiate points, milestones, when you would meet—that kind of thing?

R: I remember the first meeting with my supervisor; she must've thought, this guy knows absolutely nothing. Because I literally went in and said, I know I want to study mental health it's something that has been bothering me for a while, it's something that I want to explore but I just don't know what. And from that moment onwards, you know, I think she was kind of like, you need to give me something to work with here. At the same time I was like, I don't know what to say. You know, start of the year, you've just come back from placement, you're panicking you just don't know where it's going to go. To be honest with you, I think I am incredibly, incredibly lucky to have someone of her ability, because it's not only the skill that she brought in terms of knowing where I want to explore without me being able to say it myself; not only did she also know that the systematic literature was the perhaps the most [relevant] to conduct; but it was the way she articulated herself and the way she spoke to me. She knew at the time that I was quite, not shy, but more nervous—it's your final year you want to do well in all your modules. But I think from the moment we started university back in 2013 there is always that in the back of your head, 'oh I've got my dissertation in final year' and now it's finally here and she knew that panic was coming about. So I think the way she presented herself to me was key in the way that I performed, for sure. So that first meeting was all about kind of mind-mapping and saying why mental health and what areas might have been of interest to me. She gave me a few sources to read, she told me to kind of take in how they've done it, how previous students have done their dissertations, how systematic literature reviews that they'd done. Initially I looked and thought, I'm not doing this, it's too much effort, and honestly I can't be doing this. But then I kind of realised to myself, you know, if you're really serious about this topic and you really want to add value and not just do this dissertation just because you have to do a dissertation then I said I'm going to have to kind of eat, sleep, breathe it in a way. So when I really found out how you get those 50 sources, I almost became addicted, you know, it took me about a week and a half just to narrow it down to 50 and when she said it was going to take a couple of weeks I was like 'she wants me to honestly boil down 6000 articles to 50 in two weeks this is not going to happen'. But it becomes addictive, Emma, and I think the reason it becomes addictive is because you start to care. Natalia wanted me to do well, but also as it was a topic that was so close to my heart I wanted just to get down with it. And so definitely, so as I said at the start of this call, it definitely became my most enjoyable module for this reason. In terms of after that, going forward she had a very busy schedule so it was quite difficult to often have face-to-face meetings with her, so we would do it via Skype a lot of the time. I think it was 5? I think we were allowed 4 or 5 meetings with our supervisor. We stuck with that; in fact I think I got pretty much everything I need out of her with one interview to spare,

which just goes to show how independent I kind of became. I began to dictate the project myself, considering I was so clueless at the start, the fact I kind of managed to take this kind of baby and nurture it myself, and develop it into something that I wanted to develop it into. It was great. She gave me that freedom, I think that was the beauty of this, she gave me a guideline, she gave me a big bubble in a way, and then she was like, you know you choose what you do with that just make sure it stays relevant—that was the key. You know, like I say, Natalia was, I don't think I could've asked for a better supervisor in that respect, the key there was to give me that freedom, but at the same time made sure I stayed relevant.

I: Is there any advice you would give to students who are setting out on a dissertation project in terms of how to carry out the process and come out the other end successfully?

R: I would certainly say it's key to make sure you are open minded, because if you have a set theme or a set research question or even if you think at the start 'this is my research question, this is what I understand it to be', you can't have that mentality. A dissertation has to be truly open-ended, you know you have to have an idea, set the question and then be open to whatever results you find. You can't have this mentality whereby you want something to pan out in a particular way, and you kind of dictate or you flaw your results or findings in such a way that you find what you wanted to find. If you want to add some sort of value you have to be open-ended and you have to let the work guide you in a way. I think that's probably why my work was so well recognised is because I went into this with 'I want to find out why this happens, I want to find out what's spoken about, I want to find out what's not spoken about' and that's precisely what I did. Yeah, I would also recommend to forthcoming students kind of just to go with it really, as I say, don't have that mindset where, 'I have to do this this and this by a certain date,' because it doesn't always work like that. Have a systematic approach, but have that room for failure because there were certainly times, you know I'm not going to make out that this went swimmingly well. There were times for example when I was reading one of my 50 articles where I thought, why have I chosen this article? It's not relevant at all, not even in the slightest, but then what you have to do is...it's a stage of panic, you have to sleep it off. You have to read it in the morning with fresh eyes and think 'look no, it is relevant you chose it for a reason, you just have to read between the lines'. You know, it does get a bit much, especially when you're juggling other commitments inside and outside of university. Again, I think that's why it's also important to pick a subject where you know you can have a set focus on it for six or seven months. Because you know it is a long time, it is a long time to focus on one area and specialise in one area. If you've got a half-hearted approach towards it you're not going to enjoy it; it's going to become a burden. For me, as I say it was a topic that I wanted to explore, that I enjoy, that is close to my heart, and I chose it knowing that I will not get bored of this topic for six or seven months, and think that is certainly crucial.

I: That's really good advice. Is there anything you would have done differently if you had your time again?

R: In the technical side of it, if I had all the time in the world with no other modules I would've explored other... I used the web of science database to get my articles, there are a couple of other databases that Natalia told me about but because of time pressures I didn't want to

use too many databases. If this was an area where, you know, I was a specialist in mental health and I was going to conduct this project again I'd definitely try and get more articles because I would have more time to go through them, filter them down and perhaps answer the question with greater accuracy, you know. And 50 articles isn't really that much. For a project like this I think it's appropriate because I had enough time to give that focus, but if I had all the time in the world I would definitely pick a greater number of articles and really, really get down to the bone. In terms of if I was in this situation again, to be honest with you, no. I mean, in hindsight, everything I did was systematic, I put my heart and soul into the articles, I made sure I read them front to back. If I do think of something, I'll certainly let you know, because nothings perfect, but when I do reflect on this research I am very proud of it and there's not an awful lot to be honest with you I would've done differently.

I: That's really good, and I think your pride has obviously come from a place that's been recognised

R: Yeah

I: [and particularly] because you have done so well, so well done.

R: Thank you.

I: Those were all the questions that I had for you, was there anything else you had about your experience which might be useful or have we covered everything.

R: I think going forward it's more advice. I'm not sure how different this is to other unis, obviously I can only speak for my own university, but as I say when I first walked into that dissertation at the start of the year and we were told that primary or secondary is the route that most students take. There's not a lot of teaching on systematic literature reviews—as I say in that first meeting when Natalia told me what it was I was absolutely clueless and it took me a while to really understand what a systematic literature review was. So I think going forward there should be more emphasis from lecturers or perhaps even more textbooks that really help students understand what a systematic literature review is, so it's not something they rule out because, you know, when you do think of dissertations you think I'm going to have to go out, I'm going to have to do interviews with people I'm going to have to put it into the... these kind of skewed data findings, you know all these formulas, and I'll have my conclusions, but it doesn't have to be like that. I think I managed to, and this is no disrespect to my peers, but I think I managed to answer a lot more questions than they did in their body of work, and I think that when I explained to a lot of my friends, this is what I'm doing, you know initially they were like 'what is that'. But when I explained just exactly what it is, and just how robust it is I think a lot of them were quite attracted to the idea of doing a systematic literature review but by this point in time it was too late, they had already selected a primary one and already started conducting their interviews, so I think more emphasis needs to be applied on what systematic literature reviews are and how useful they can be. And also another thing I wanted to say is, I'm going to be completely honest, if you'd said I need to me now I need to go through 80 or so articles and read them I would've said 'no chance' you know. I wouldn't have had that mentality, that focus to sit down in the evening with articles and just go through them and read them and digest them—that's not something

that I would do. My strongest point at university was more number crunching and more the creative side of things, but I was forced to do this and by the end of it I enjoyed it, I wanted to do it, you know. As I say to you know if I was to do anything differently I would definitely read more articles and digest and it helps you become more articulate in the way you speak, in the way you think, the way you read and write. So again I think that... again, that is another strong point about systematic literature reviews, it makes you become a more well-rounded person and again... I'm going to be completely honest there's not going to be students out there who won't say you know 'I didn't make made up some of the results' when they did their primary research, but with this I can't say that, you know? You need to sit down you need to read it and it's all there on paper, whereas these students might have panicked nearer to the time to deadline like 'oh I'm going to have to make up some of these interviews'. But there's no hiding with a systematic literature review again that's just, it's real—that's the beauty of it. That makes me more proud that I've taken real work and I've put it into something real in the space of six or seven months.

I: Yeah, good points. And we do cover systematic literature review in Business Research Methods. [inaudible interruption from respondent] I will certainly be looking closely at it in the light of what you've said, and I think what your interview, the interview that you've given me, will enable me to do is to weave it through that chapter. So I'm thinking that, you know, there will be some key points in the book, particularly around the literature review section where I would like to feature some of your accounts. I suppose there is one last thing which occurs to me, which is the tree diagram that you came up with and the matrix, would you be willing to consider granting copyright; it may be that we put that in the book or it may be that we may put those two diagrams with your consent and obviously credited to you on the website resources. Because if they were useful to you, they would probably be very useful to other students as an example.

R: Yeah, to be honest with you, Emma, even if you didn't ask me that question, it was going to be something I was going to suggest anyway. Particularly, I mean that tree diagram has been used in previous work before, so a lot of academics are probably familiar with it, but that 4x4 I think is quite unique to me, and if students can use that in their forthcoming dissertations...like I say, I'm more than willing to help. So yeah, that's not a problem at all.

I: And I think the diagrams with the account you have given me are quite self-explanatory but if there is a paragraph of description that you might attach as well as an account of the diagram then if you would be able to send that to me as an attachment, then I will make sure that we get the copyright clearance to be able to use that, because I think they'd both be really useful.

R: On the page where I do feature my 4x4, there is a small paragraph at the top of that that explains what the conceptual map is, and what it explains so you're more than welcome to nick that as well, that's not a problem.

[laughter]

I: That's great, thank you very much and all the best.

R: Not at all.

I: I think you're a natural researcher so whether it's in your current job or future directions you take, I would hope you carry on.

R: Thank you. One last thing I will say as well on that is that Natalia did notice herself that after this six or seven months of knowing me you do change as a person as well in the way that you present yourself. I wasn't too great with words and the start—even now sometimes I struggle with what I want to say, but I have a more clear way of presenting myself than this time last year and again I think a body of work like this does help that, so that's something important for the students to know as well. As a person, as cliché as it sounds, it does happen.

I: Definitely

R: Thank you, thank you for your recognition this morning and thank you for your time. Any help you want in the future, anything you want to take I'd be more than happy to speak to you again...