

## One & Other Project

### Wellcome Trust Oral History Collection

#### *Interviewing the Interviewers Survey*

Wellcome Trust would like to capture your perceptions and reflections on the interviewing process as part of the overall Wellcome Trust oral history collection. It will allow you as one of the interviewers to document and reflect on their your own lived experiences (personal and emotional), provide an insider's perspective of the interviewing processes and develop a further set of reflective interviews that would go to enrich the existing oral history collection. Please answer the following questions and write as long or as little as you would like and feel free to add anything else you feel was important.

#### 1- General

1. *Your name, age and where you come from.*

Trine Van Thielen - MacPhail

2. *How many interviews did you conduct (roughly)?*

+/- 50

3. *How did you get involved in the project?*

I heard contacted Artichoke for any job vacancies.

4. *Any previous experience of interviewing? If so describe.*

No

#### 2- Technical/Practical: rapport building, silences, listening

1. *Did you know about Oral History before you got involved in this project?*

No

2. *What did you think about oral history as a methodology after receiving the training?*

Brilliant. It's an interesting way of interviewing and getting an inside into people's lives/history as open questions are asked as opposed to leading questions, which gives the interviewee more freedom.

3. *How comfortable did you feel with the recording equipment (including the MIC)?*

It took me some time to get used to it but as soon as it was explained properly I felt very comfortable.

4. *How much did the interviewees know, understand about the project aims/the interview style before the interviews?*

It varied

5. *Building Rapport and Trust: strategies you employed before and during the interview.*

Made sure I explained the interview process properly beforehand so the interviewee was very clear of what was involved and of the importance of the interview.

6. *Strategies employed in getting the narrator to talk, open up.*

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Remained professional but friendly and approachable as I felt that the more comfortable the interviewee felt the more easier it was for them to open up. If the interviewee didn't feel comfortable about a certain topic, I would go on to something else and then come back to it later.

Always made sure to ask the participant about their day at the beginning of the interview.

*7. How did you find managing your own agendas as interviewers (covering the main required topics) versus probing on what the interviewee was offering?*

Difficult as we had a very short space of time for an oral history interview, but I tried to cover everything as best I could within that time.

*8. Any anxieties when entering the interview relationship? Give specific examples.*

For my first interview I felt nervous as the technique was very new to me and I didn't want to make any mistakes. I felt comfortable during the interviews that followed and the more I practiced.

*9. Topics that you covered in the interviews and reactions to them by the interviewee (silences, the interviewee not answering a question, unexpected turns in the direction of the interview).*

When I asked about a participant's father she mentioned he'd died, and didn't want to talk about this. She got a little upset. When asked "Who are you doing it for?" Nearly everybody answered "Me", for various reasons. The recession was also an important topic which affected the majority of the interviewees

*10. Environment: the room, the shift organizations, which shifts worked best and why?*

I only worked on the daytime shifts which was great. Unfortunately, there wasn't much time for a break and the room was very hot at times and it was quite noisy.

### 3- Personal/Emotional:

*1. Projections that you noticed (based on age, gender, class, identity of the interviewee).*

Younger people i.e. teenagers and early 20's were a little more nervous and didn't open up as easily. One interviewee was 19 and aspergic [Asperger's syndrome]. His answers were very short and he seemed to want to talk about a limited section of topics.

*2. What were the most emotional moments of these interviews?*

I interviewed a refugee from Iran. He had to leave the country as he was arrested and faced prosecution. His story (even in the short space of time) was very emotional.

*3. What were the hardest issues the interviewees raised? And why?*

Cancer. Because the illness affects such a great number, many participants had lost friends or family members or have suffered the illness themselves.

*4. Did you relate to any of their stories? If so describe.*

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Yes because I have also had family members suffer from the illness in various guises, as well as having suffered from a mild form myself.

### *5. Any moments in which empathy was hard to achieve and why?*

One particular participant seemed disgruntled with society and a wide range of issues. His negative attitude was sometimes overly bitter. Other than this most participants were very co-operative and positive.

### *6. Any moments in which empathy was easy to achieve and why?*

I found most participants easy to connect with as they were open, chatty, and were happy to be a part of the experience. Specifically I found one participant who had a similar academic background to myself and this provided instant common ground.

### *7. Any other feelings/thoughts that emerged during your interviews?*

From me: I was amazed to see the massive range of people who took part in the project, from all ages, walks of life and backgrounds. From participants: Some resentment arose occasionally, mostly directed at the education sector. Some participants felt that educational institutions were under-par for various reasons.

### *1. What were the experiences you remembered most easily about your own interviewing practice and why?*

### *2. Is there more you would like to say?*

One interviewee said that he may do something completely different on the plinth than he had intended before the interview, because the interview had made him reflect and think about his reason for participating in the project in more detail.

### *3. What advice could you give to other interviewers about interviewing style etc?*

Be chatty and friendly but don't talk too much to them prior to the interview as not to reveal too much information outside of the interview. Silences are vital as it prompts the interviewee to reveal further info through awkwardness. But guide them through the silence if you feel that they are about to clam up.

## **4- Reflecting on the experience as a whole: (through time)**

### *1. What did this experience of interviewing the plinthers for the One and Other project bring to you?*

It brought me in first term contact with the diversity in the country. I feel that many times people tend to socialize within their own sections of society and do not mix outside of their own circle. This project has shown me that interacting different sorts of people can enrich your life and experience base.

### *2. Did you make new friends?*

Yes, within the organization I was working to I met many new friends, although there wasn't as much time as I would have liked with the plinthers.

### *3. Did this experience change you as a person: if yes, how? If not, then what have you learned? Specifically, what did talking to someone about their lives, feelings and motivations for going on the plinth make you feel/think? What are you taking with you from this experience?*

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Yes. I have feel I have learned a lot from the plinthers. There are certain diseases I wasn't really aware of. They have certainly enriched my life. I have gained a thorough interest in oral history. Talking to the interviewees about their lives made me reflect upon my own.

*4. Finally, would you do it again?*

Definitely

*5. If yes, what would you change in the interview structure or the project as a whole?*

I would allow more time for the interviews, and conduct them at more sociable hours as interviews in the middle of the night can suffer from the interviewee and interviewer not being as alert.

*6. If not, why?*

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