

One & Other Project

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.*

Josh Black, 23, Manchester, lived in London for 16 months

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

50

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

Artichoke had [my] CV on file – already an assistant on the One&Other project.

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?*

Yes, I had studied some as part of my History degree at Cambridge.

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

Really useful, emphasised what I already knew about learning about marginalized groups, picking up information that otherwise would never be recorded etc.

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

OK – sometimes awkward if the interviewee was uncomfortable with the mic. Often worried that the wires may be loose!

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

Most weren't aware before arriving, I would tell them a little bit about why we were doing the interview and how it would work before starting.

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

Chatting to them beforehand, letting them know about the single

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audio feed so that they wouldn't think I was antisocial by not talking over them. Leaning in, keeping close to them, trying to look engaged.

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

Following up on things they were saying in later questions, also nodding encouragement when they said something interesting.

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

Fine generally – most of the time these questions were answered although occasionally they weren't willing to open up very much at all.

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

A couple of people who I had tried to engage with before the interview, were very withdrawn, I felt before the interview that it would be difficult to get many answers from them and this proved to be correct. One man had possibly drunk a bit much and arrived late, seemed very rude – I was worried about the interview and wanted to get it over with as quickly as possible, but in fact he turned out to be very interesting.

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).

Occasionally interviewees were not happy with personal questions being asked in the interviews, and long silences or short answers, making it difficult to come up with follow-up questions.

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

As an assistant as well, I did not have a set shift pattern over the whole project so often had long working hours with the assistant role and various other jobs – sometimes I could be very tired on shifts!

3- Personal/Emotional:

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

I did struggle with a couple of straight males (particularly younger) who did not really have very much to say and I couldn't identify with them. Also a few of the people I interviewed under 20 with little life experience proved difficult subjects – although on the other hand there were a few who proved very interesting with lots of aspirations and ideas. I did identify and engage more with people I identified with e.g liberal, arts-based/interested, gay etc.

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

I interviewed a lady who had lost her son last year, he was a little younger than me but came from a similar background – very emotional.

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

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Gary, who was wheelchair bound because of bone cancer, gained much sympathy through his story, but then at the same time some of his attitudes re illegal immigrants were difficult to stomach. One interviewee spoke intensively about his belief that the world was going to be overtaken by aliens in 2012 – I found it very hard to take him seriously but he was absolutely passionate in his beliefs.

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

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

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

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

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?*

Once or twice because I was tired I did find myself at a loss with a follow-up question and had to pause the recording.

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

Not to speak over the person, trying to engage, constantly be thinking of the next question!

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?*

A greater engagement with the project than I felt as an assistant, a re-wakening of my interest in history, lessons in tolerating other beliefs. Also lots of interesting ideas about religious beliefs and ways of life.

2. *Did you make new friends?*

I hope so!

3. *Did this experience change you as a person:*

See above

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?

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 have liked more time with the subjects, or at least the option of more time for the interesting ones! Of course the practicalities of the project meant that was not possible.

6. *If not, why?*

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