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Agony aunt, hostage, intruder or friend?
The multiple *personas* of the interviewer during fieldwork

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper examines how the role of the interviewer is manipulated by the interviewees in return for them offering their experiences, opinions and information during qualitative research interviews.

Design/methodology: Semi-structured interviews in the qualitative paradigm were carried out with 55 architects from the East Midlands region of the UK. The interview data is supported by research diary evidence.

Findings: A typology of four interviewer *personas* is presented: as 'agony aunt, hostage, intruder or friend'.

Research limitations/implications: The four *personas* were generated by the interviewees' responses to one researcher which is a limitation. However, the study could be replicated with other researchers/interviewers in different interview situations.

Practical implications: The research has practical value in highlighting the multiple facets of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee in qualitative research. It will be of value to both experienced and new researchers.

Originality/value: The development of the typology represents the originality and value of the research. Previous research has focused more on telling the stories rather than the development of new theory relating to interviewing.

Title: *¿Consultor sentimental, intruso, rehén o amigo? Los múltiples papeles del entrevistador durante el trabajo de campo*

Abstract

Objeto: Este artículo analiza la manera en la que los entrevistados manipulan el papel del entrevistador durante la realización de entrevistas cualitativas de investigación, todo ello a cambio de que los entrevistados compartan sus experiencias, opiniones e información.

Diseño/metodología/enfoque: De acuerdo con el paradigma de investigación cualitativo, se hicieron entrevistas semi estructuradas a 55 arquitectos de la región de East Midlands en el Reino Unido. Además de las entrevistas la entrevistadora tomó notas acerca de la situación de entrevista con el objeto de formar el diario de investigación.

Aportaciones y resultados: Se presenta una tipología de 4 personajes de entrevistador: "consultor sentimental, rehén, intruso o amigo".

Limitaciones de la investigación/implicaciones: La tipología de entrevistadores surge del análisis del papel representado por un único entrevistador. Sin embargo, los resultados pueden aplicarse a otros investigadores/entrevistadores en distintas situaciones de entrevista.

Implicaciones Prácticas: Este trabajo tiene valor práctico puesto que pone de relieve las múltiples facetas de la relación entrevistador-entrevistado en la investigación cualitativa. Puede resultar útil tanto para investigadores experimentados como noveles.

Originalidad/valor añadido: La originalidad y el valor de la investigación residen en la identificación y el desarrollo de la tipología de personajes. Investigaciones previas se han centrado más en contar las historias que en desarrollar nueva teoría relacionada con el proceso de entrevistar.

Introduction

Interviews are well-established as one of the key tools within qualitative research due to their flexibility and ability to be adapted to a diverse range of research settings. As a result there is a multitude of texts covering the entire range of possibilities of their use, as well as instructions for carrying out successful interviews. For new researchers, the sheer quantity of the information is overwhelming not to mention the complexity of associated (and contradictory) issues such as how to avoid subjectivity, the benefits of reflexivity, and the like (See for example Denzin, 2001; Finch, 1993; Gubrium and Holstein, 2002; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Wolcott, 1995).

While there are plenty of 'how to' manuals, it is only much more recently that there has been consideration of how the meaning obtained from interviews is co-constructed by both parties. Cassell (2005) drawing on Denzin (2001) and Holstein and Gubrium (1997) highlights an additional outcome – that of "the creation of interviewer identity" (Cassell, 2005 page: 168). This paper argues that contrary to conventional thinking about the interviewing process, the interviewer may perceive or believe that s/he is in control but the reality is that interviewees can exert a powerful influence over the situation. The contribution of this work is to highlight how interviewees manipulate the interview process as well as the role of the interviewer for their own purposes. The paper discusses how the different relationships – established by the interviewees – arising from the interviews lead to multiple *personas* being imposed on the interviewer, in particular, four are identified: the interviewer as Agony Aunt, Hostage, Intruder or Friend.

Drawing upon several strands of theory including auto ethnography and reflexivity (Humphreys, 2005; Cunliffe, Ashcraft, Humphreys, Learmouth & Locke*,* 2007), liminal ethnography (Bargiela-Chiappinni, 2007), emotions and field work (Kleinman and Copp, 1993), identity (Cassell, 2005); the experiences of one interviewer using in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants are discussed. The initial research project discussed here was an investigation into the careers of architects – the researcher wanted to find out why people chose it as a profession, how they found the studying process, how had their careers developed, what were the pressures and satisfactions; and, what were the rewards and stresses which accompany the career. In short, it was a project examining the 'lived'

experience of architecture as a career. Male and female architects were selected at random from of the East Midlands Regional Branch of the Royal Institute of British Architects Register of Members (in the UK) and were initially approached by letter giving details of the research, asking if they would be willing to be interviewed. In many cases, architects responded immediately phoning the researcher to arrange to be interviewed. In a small minority of cases, the researcher followed up the letter with a phone call asking if the architect would participate. In total, 55 architects agreed to take part: 37 women were interviewed between April 1996 - October 1997 and 18 men from October 2001 – December 2001. All interviews followed a semi-structured format allowing the interviewer to follow up areas or for the interviewee to elaborate on things which were relevant to them. The interviews were carried out in a variety of locations: in their homes, office, at pubs or cafes; times varied from lunchtime, evening and even weekends to fit in with the architects' work schedules. All were recorded and transcribed ad verbatim. Analysis of the interviews was carried out using a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), which allows themes to emerge from the data and where initial findings can be used to influence subsequent data collection.

The researcher also kept a detailed interview diary noting when letters were sent, who responded immediately, where the interview was held, the duration, how the interviewer was received by the interviewee, whether refreshments were offered and other details. Initially the research diary was intended to be an aide-memoire for the researcher but has provided a strong underpinning for the preparation of this paper. It was on re-reading the diary following the completion of the first round of research that the researcher noted patterns of behaviour emerging from the interviewees and these were then explored further during the second round of interviews.

Introducing the Interviewer

I was well-versed with the process of carrying out in-depth interviews from my PhD research training which involved taking classes in research methods. Also, I was familiar with many of the 'how to' books covering the interview process (Mason 1997; Kvale 1996; Bryman 1988a, 1988b; Silverman 1997; Wengraf 2001) as well as feminist literature on interviewing women (Finch 1983; Marshall 1992; Mies 1993; Oakley 1981; Greed 1990; Stanley 1990). These texts, while valuable in guiding the reader through the processes of carrying out in-depth interviews, tend to focus on the practicalities. Where the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee is mentioned, it is with regard to the creation of rapport and, in the case of the feminist texts, power relations. The common theme is that the interviewer can control the interview and the interviewees are passive "repositories of knowledge, evidence, experience or whatever" (Mason, 1997: page 35), in other words, data sources waiting to be tapped by the

researcher who must "ensure the interview interaction actually does generate relevant data which means simultaneously orchestrating the intellectual and social dynamics of the situation" (Mason, 1997: page 43).

However, during the research when I was interviewing both men and women, despite using a common list of topics to be covered, I became more aware of the different directions in which the interviews went and, more importantly, the differing motivations of the interviewees for taking part. When I had made the initial contact with the interviewees I was surprised at their willingness to take part as only one refused to be interviewed, and only one who refused me permission to record the interview. On the whole, the participants were very generous with their time and stories when effectively, there was nothing I could give in return. The interviewer is very dependent on the goodwill of their subjects as they are taking part voluntarily and this cannot simply be explained away as people like talking about themselves especially if they think it has some academic value as Buchanan Boddy and Mccalman (1988) suggest. The subjects of the research have their own motivation to take part and anticipation of the outcome of the research interview. What follows is a consideration of these expectations of the interviewees and my insight of their perception of me as the interviewer. I do not intend them to be exclusive and all-encompassing but I offer them as a contrast to the rather prescriptive notion contained in many texts that the researcher can and must fully control the research process.

Because I wanted to gain a holistic view of the career in order to develop a complete view of the individual, to assess the importance of their career to them, to ask what they demand of their career in return for their input, to examine the location of their career within their lives and families, a career life-history approach was used which is considered to be particularly appropriate for the subjective career (Beynon, 1985). The distinction between the subjective and objective dimensions of the career was suggested by Hughes (1958). The subjective area comprises the individual's own perspective of the career, what it actually means to them and how they approach it whilst the objective area refers to the formal structure of the organisations, hierarchy and employment from which the career is constructed (Arnold & Cohen, 2008; Evetts, 1990). To achieve this, the main method of examination is by in-depth, semi-structured interviewing to allow the 'stories' to be told by the subjects. The sample size is small but allows each case to be examined in great detail and, in any case, the amount of data generated by in-depth interviewing tends to be considerable.

In addition, the issue of reflexivity is important. I came to this research following a previous career as a quantity surveyor and, at the time of the interviews with the women, I was married to an architect thus there is an element of liminal ethnography (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2007) to

this work. My background was of special relevance as invariably I was asked by the architects as to why I had chosen them to research. The disclosure of my dual involvement appeared to identify me as one of them and, like Finch, I "found this a much simpler strategy than attempts to explain how intellectually fascinating I found their situation" (Finch, 1993: page 172). I was familiar with procedures and conventions within the profession and I also had a number of contacts within the profession from my time as a quantity surveyor and felt comfortable contacting them to discuss my project. Equally importantly, I spoke their "private language" (Symes, Eley & Seidel, 1995: page 3) again through my previous career and as a result I was familiar with both the public and private worlds of architects, and as Evetts (1990) noted when investigating the subjective career, the mix of public and private is closely intertwined and interrelated. The notion of "shared experiences" between me and the interviewees was particularly valuable in initially creating the rapport whereby the richness and depth of information generated in the interviews was enhanced. In addition, it facilitated the process of carrying out the interviews because I did not have to ask for explanations of the technical and industry-specific terminology: for example, I knew what was meant when they talked about site visits, AI's (Architect's Instructions – formal notices of changes to the project), subbies (Subcontractors). In addition, I was aware of the hierarchies of roles and relationships between those involved with construction projects, which meant that the interviews followed a more natural conversation-like format than being question and answer sessions had I been asking for information as well as for clarification of terms. While the value of the 'shared experience' is well-rehearsed by authors such as Arendell (1997), less is known about the impact on the 'robustness' of the findings as a result. A key criticism of qualitative research is the perceived bias on the part of the interviewer "inherent in the fact that interviewers are human beings and not machines" (Selltiz & Jahoda, 1962: page 41 cited by Fielding & Thomas, 2008: page 260) but as Merton and Kendall (1946) (cited by Fieldeing & Thomas, 2008: page 260) argue, it cannot be ignored as long as the bias does not result from flaws in the actual process.

The Interviews

I had devised a schedule of topic areas to be covered rather than a series of formal questions. The intention was to encourage the interviewees to 'talk around' the topics rather than to give close-ended answers. The interviews started with discussing what had attracted them to the architecture profession initially, leading onto how their careers had developed, the pressures and satisfactions of the profession, factors which had helped or hindered their careers, and plans for the future. All but one of the interviews were transcribed and NUD.IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data: Indexing, Searching and Theorising) qualitative research software was used to assist in the storage and interpretation of the interview transcripts and

the notes. Whilst it does not replace the role of the researcher in the analysis and interpretation of the data, it facilitates the generation of theory by providing the ability to code the transcripts, to search for words and phrases quickly and enables the retrieval of coded text segments, related memos and reports (Richards & Richards, 1994). NUD.IST enabled themes to be identified and explored easily and quickly forming the basis for emergent codes. Relationships could be explored and hunches followed. The fact that the interviews were carried out over a relatively long period of time provided a valuable opportunity to reflect on what was being said and to consider whether it would be useful to explore the emergent themes in future interviews. This initial coding provided an important basis for the development of applying conceptual labels to the data; furthermore, to the process of identifying connections between the concepts, relationships, themes and the like which arose from the data.

To assist in the interpretive process, as well as having the transcripts of the interviews, I also made copious notes in my research diary. Firstly, in some cases I made notes if I received an immediate response by mail or phone to my introductory letter. Immediately after the interview I recorded where we met, how the interview had gone and any other relevant comment, and during transcription I noted interruptions by family or colleagues as well as non-verbal reactions to questions or subjects that were being discussed. These notes help in the development of the interviews from a mass of transcripts into the construction of meanings as well as providing an aide-memoire to me of the context of the interview.

At this time, as a novice researcher, I believed that I was in control of the interview and so was attempting to do it properly – whatever, is meant by 'properly'. I was trying to hold back in order not to dominate in line with the feminist literature I had read on carrying out interviews with women. I was very familiar with Mason's (1997) work, rereading it many times to try to 'learn' what to do; I knew that I had to "ensure the interview interaction actually does generate relevant data which means simultaneously orchestrating the intellectual and social dynamics of the situation. It is all too easy to orchestrate a pleasant social encounter whose contact has little or no bearing on the intellectual puzzle which the research is designed to address" (Mason, 1997: page 43). A note in my research diary reads:

> *"Mason is fairly prescriptive about the process of interviewing but overestimates the amount of control the researcher/interviewer has over the situation. [The] interviewer is dependent on the goodwill of interviewee as they don't necessarily have to take part but are doing so voluntarily".*

On rereading my interview notes and reflecting on what I was doing, I realised I needed to improve my interviewing technique. It became very apparent that I had to give something of myself – in other words, the interview was going to be a reciprocal arrangement and not just a

sharing of information. The interviewees were requiring something from me and, perhaps more importantly, something of me in return for their time and goodwill. What follows is a discussion of the creation by the interviewees of multiple *personas* of me as an interviewer and an attempt to conceptualise these *personas* in terms of identity, space and power.

"Just sit there and listen" - Interviewer as "agony aunt"

Fletcher explains how she "listened to hero stories with amazing amounts of patience and provided positive stroking concerning job/marital problems" (Fletcher 2002 pages: 411-412) during her research in a male-dominated factory setting. In addition, "[I] was expected to be listener, to be caring and to offer emotional nurturing" (Fletcher 2002 page: 413). However, this is not just the case with male interviewee–female interviewer research relationships but also with female interviewee-female interviewer as many of the women interviewed in this research project also used the interview almost as a 'confessional' or counselling session.

During my interviews with architects, I asked questions relating to the family situation of the interviewees and this provided the basis for some very frank and open discussions. One of them used the interview as an opportunity to think out loud, musing at length about wanting to have a baby. The interview diary extract reads:

> *"Interview lasted about 2 hours including time spent getting drinks. Very confident and down to earth … was using me to sound out ideas about her own future, is looking for someone to take over practice as she plans to have a baby. Not really interested in me, cut me off if I spoke".*

Carla's husband had changed career from a well-paid position to become a clergyman, this had involved a move to a new town meaning Carla's career had to be put on hold. Of more significance to her was that she was expected to adopt the role of clergyman's wife which coupled with the fact that her husband no longer had clearly defined working hours or workplace meant that she had become very depressed. She used the interview to express her loneliness and unhappiness with her life change but also saying she felt guilty for feeling like this because of her husband's commitment to his new career.

Michelle also admitted to loneliness, she was self-employed and worked from home and lacked contact with others as she lived alone. The interview took place in her home and the visit lasted almost four hours as she was very reluctant to let me go, I began to feel I was being held hostage especially when I asked to use the bathroom, after having been plied with copious quantities of tea and coffee, and she stood outside the bathroom door to continue the conversation!

Finch (1993) mentions that several of the women she interviewed at home appeared to be

lonely. An interviewer making an appointment to visit a woman to talk to her about her life, is implicitly displaying her interest in that woman as well as providing an opportunity for her to feel that her opinions and experiences are relevant and do matter. People generally tend to be flattered when asked to talk about themselves and their experiences, especially when they feel it is to be of some academic value (Buchanan et al., 1988).

It is not only personal difficulties that interviewees want to share, Joanna had been passed over for promotion in favour of a less experienced male colleague; Martin had recently been made redundant and felt very bitter towards his former employers; and Richard and James were going through a process of re-evaluating their lives and careers. In James's case, he admitted it had been prompted by my request for an interview and brought with him a five-year career plan. Richard had recently become a father and realised his commitment to his career had been affected by this. He became tearful during the interview has he spoke about how little he saw of his son because of long working hours. Both were keen to press me on how other interviewees had coped with these issues presenting me with an ethical difficulty of how to be able to answer them without compromising the confidentiality promised to interviewees.

The request for an interview appeared to provide an opportunity for these subjects to assess their careers and lives and because I had asked questions where they were able to answer relating their career experiences to their current life positions, they used the interview to think aloud and attempt to make sense of their situations. For them the interview perhaps offered the unique opportunity to mull over issues which they were not able to articulate otherwise.

"You can interview me but I won't tell you anything" – Interviewer as intruder

This is the test of an interviewer's skills where s/he tries to elicit information from a subject who has agreed to be interviewed but who is unforthcoming in the actual interview. The texts on interviewing have little to say about how to proceed in such situations. Roulston (2010) talks of challenges in qualitative interviewing and advises on developing strategies but this assumes that the researcher is aware of the potential challenge prior to arriving in to the interview situation. Bryony was very welcoming, she contacted me the same day as she had received my letter inviting her to take part and we set up an interview for the following week. She invited me to her home which is also her workplace; she made coffee and chatted about her role as local councillor, about living in a conservation area and her hobbies. Her responses to the interview questions appeared fine at the time but I had another interview arranged with Ruth, a friend of Bryony's, which took place immediately afterwards. Ruth knew I had come straight from Bryony's and commented "Poor Bryony, she's really worried about her work isn't she, what with the accident and her Mum being so ill?" Ruth assumed that Bryony would have

told me during her interview that during the past few months she had broken her leg and had to nurse her elderly mother and that these had a huge impact on her work as she was self-employed. However, following the interview Bryony contacted me via a professional networking site and invited me to join her network.

While Bryony had been chatty and friendly if not especially informative, Sally was a most reluctant interviewee. She gave monosyllabic answers and declined to comment on a number of issues. The interview lasted less than 20 minutes and she would not allow me to use any details from it. Bob, on the other hand, was very forthcoming about his career but deflected any question relating to himself or his family life yet he had numerous photographs of his children displayed around his drawing board. The questions asked were not of an overtly personal nature but related to the work-life balance and the impact of family life on his career. A further point regarding this interview is that it was conducted with both of us standing at his drawing board for the hour that I spent with him in his office.

Jack appeared to be happy to be interviewed but was very keen to establish ground rules and wanted to know all the questions in advance, which was difficult given the fact that I used topic areas to be talked around rather than formal close-ended questions. His work situation was somewhat unusual, he is self-employed and works from an office in a nearby town to his home but he has no telephone in his office and clients do not visit him there. All phone calls are made to his home number to be taken by his wife and he visits clients in their offices or homes not his. He was interviewed in his home and answered my questions factually but without giving any depth or feeling.

Again, we as researchers are there as "guests" of our subjects, we cannot oblige them to speak or to be forthcoming. This is a paradox of qualitative interviewing in that we have made arrangements to see the interviewees, we have explained the nature of our work but we cannot compel them to present us with the evidence we require. Yet we have to respect this and remember that Buchanan et al. (1988) observation that people like talking about themselves may not always be the case.

"You will listen to me!" – Interviewer as hostage

The notion of power held by the interviewer is well documented particularly in relation to feminist methodologies (Oakley, 1981). In addition, there is the implicit idea that vulnerability is the domain of the interviewee (Sinding & Aronson, 2003) with the interviewer controlling both the topics under discussion and proceedings in general. The converse – about interviewee taking control – occurred with Bill, Adam and Susie.

I originally contacted Adam's wife to arrange to interview her, she explained that her husband

was also an architect so I arranged to interview them both at their home. I was made to feel very welcome at the start but it became apparent that Adam had opinions that he was determined to voice. His business (he was a self-employed sole practitioner) was not doing well and he appeared very bitter about a number of issues ranging from local authority planning departments to his Member of Parliament. The interview situation provided him with an opportunity to vent his anger not only about his work and career but also most of all his clients ("They're all w****rs!").

Bill was also a self-employed sole practitioner; the interview took place in a pub near his office. He seemed to enjoy taking the dominant role and appeared to be playing cat and mouse games switching from delivering a stream of invective to a full-on charm offensive. Many of the questions, he completely ignored choosing to offer his highly contestable personal opinions particularly about women (their lack of intelligence and their place being in the home) and politics (his were extremely right wing). Attempts to steer the interview back to his career were disregarded, at the end of the interview I was little wiser about his work and career than at the outset. On leaving I became aware he had been taping the interview using a small tape recorder hidden in his jacket pocket. This was the only interview that was not transcribed, I could not face listening to him again so destroyed the recording.

Unlike Goodwin's experience (Abusidualghoul, Goodwin, James, Rainnie, Venter & White, 2009), while the situation was unpleasant at no time was I in personal danger. The interview took place in a busy restaurant, my colleagues knew where I was, who I was meeting and what time I was likely to return but the whole experience was particularly unpleasant. While Bill and Adam were similar in that they were both forthright with their opinions, at no time did I feel that Adam was directing his anger at me personally whereas Bill tried to both flatter me and intimidate me for no apparent reason other than he was in a position to do so. These instances illustrate how power relations can be manipulated by the interviewee. In the same way as Arendell describes an unpleasant situation (from her research involving male divorcees) where she identifies that she was "[c]onstantly aware of and preoccupied with what was occurring, [but] I never addressed it, unable to find a suitable but sufficiently non-confrontational response" (Arendell, 1997: page 361) I felt unable to either retaliate or leave the situation. The situations were far less extreme than Moreno's (1995) account of rape which occurred during fieldwork but still were unsettling all the same and highlight how gender-neutrality is not possible.

Dominance in the interview situation is not necessarily the sole preserve of the male interviewees with some of the female interviewees seeking to control the position and process albeit in a much less domineering manner. In one interview, that of Susie, which took place in

the meeting room at her office, she was called away after 45 minutes. It appeared deliberate and arranged prior to my visit as her secretary had rescheduled the interview a number of times and also asked for very precise details about the questions to be asked and the length of time that I required. It is somewhat ironic that I had been careful to adopt a feminist approach to the interview methods following Oakley's (1981) criticism of the traditional hierarchical interview on the grounds that it is a one-way process in which the interviewee is offered nothing in return, the hierarchical relationship with the balance of power favouring the interviewer is inconsistent with feminism and as such, indefensible for women to use other women in such a way.

"It's been great talking to you, keep in touch" – Interviewer as friend

Similar to 'interviewer as agony aunt', interviewer as friend is warmly invited into homes or to meet in restaurants for lunch but here the interviewees seem to want to create a friendship with the interviewer. It was these interviewees who offered the most hospitality for example, lunch with Ruth and Gordon in their home; Colin offering advice on an extension at my home; Paul and Daniel both worked from offices adjoining their homes and invited me into their homes for coffee and so on. These interviewees also expressed the highest level of satisfaction with their working lives, which may go some way towards explaining their friendliness. In the same way that the earlier *personas* were imposed on the interviewer by the interviewees attempting to control the interview for their own means, I suggest here that, while there was no sense of manipulation *per se*, there was a sense of wanting to share their good fortune. These interviewees were generous with their time and hospitality as well as their career and work experiences.

Oakley (1981) stresses the benefits of less-structured research methods that avoid a hierarchical relationship with the subject on the grounds that a structured approach objectifies the women being interviewed which are inappropriate within feminist research. Finch reinforces this by stating:

> *"Women are almost always enthusiastic about talking to a woman researcher... their intentions are apparent, simply from the hospitality which one characteristically receives... One is, therefore, being welcomed in to the interviewee's home as a guest, not merely tolerated as an inquisitor"* (Finch, 1993: page 167).

Like Finch (1993) I was surprised at how easily the subjects, both men and women, talked in the interview situation and the warm reception I received. I was welcomed into their homes or if the interview was carried out at work, invited for lunch. However, aside these offers of hospitality was the genuine interest that these interviewees showed in my research asking for

copies of papers and keeping in touch after the interviews with calls asking how the research was going.

My previous career as a quantity surveyor helped in this capacity as I spoke their "private language" (Symes, Eley & Seidel, 1995: page 3) and this gave us a shared perspective rather than the interview existing solely as an exchange of information. With the female interviewees, we also had in common the fact that we were women in a male-dominated environment. While the shared language was common across all the interviewee groups, it was most apparent within this *persona* that these interviewees were keen to establish rapport. I do not believe that it had a significant difference on the actual findings of the interviews but it was definitely the case that they were the more enjoyable (from my perspective) data collection opportunities of the four types as I was able to feel more relaxed about the process.

Conclusion - Conceptualising the personas: power, space and identity

The multiple *personas* of one researcher as described above highlight the subjective nature of qualitative research. There are critics who will feel the lack of 'standardisation' means that the findings are less reliable or valid than if they had been carried out using other research instruments. However, on the other hand the creation of the interviewer's multiple *personas* shows the richness and depth which can be achieved. It is the complexity of human nature which becomes apparent – all the interviews were carried out by the same researcher/interviewer discussing the same topic areas but was different types of encounters because of the way the interviewees influenced the situation to attempt to achieve what it was they wanted from the interviewer. Humans are subjective, ever-changing as individuals and the researcher/interviewer is too. Central is the relationship between interviewer and informant, which is based on "constant emotion and constant evaluation on both sides" (Wengraf, 2001: page 42). This evolving power-balance is influenced by histories and social roles of those involved and, as Wengraf (2001) emphasises, does not have to be a win-lose situation for those involved but can be a win-win situation for both parties.

As researchers, we are dependent on the goodwill of our research subjects; they are offering their time and their experiences to be used by us for our own purposes and gain. It is to be expected that the subjects may require something in return as illustrated by the *personas* identified above. These can be conceptualised in terms of power, space and identity relating to both the researcher and the researched. These need exploring further in order to advance our understanding of how they relate to and influence the research process.

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