

Negotiating multiple positionalities in interviews; gender, generation and the rest!

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The study

- Examined men's practices, relationships and social geographies as grandfathers,
- 31 men interviewed from the north-west of England about their experiences of grandfathering,
- Sample characteristics – aged between 52 and 86 years old, all heterosexual, all white (except one who had Jamaican heritage), varied familial circumstances.
- Interviews predominantly took place in the men's homes – ethical considerations and implications,



Negotiating multiple positionalities

- Established feminist literature about how gender mediates researcher/researched relationships
- Age and generation much less discussed
- ‘Plural identities’ (Okely & Callaway 1992), ‘betweeness’ (Nast, 1994) or multiple positionalities (McDowell 1998; Hopkins 2009)
- Similarities and **difference** - Gender and generation
 - Young female researcher interviewing men aged 52 - 88



Negotiating sexism

[Discussing work]: I wouldn't work on a female ward, nattering old bitches, no I don't mean that! (laughs) you go round, "oh God", no I won't go down that road..."

Reg, age 66.

"I suppose it's an awful thing to say these days isn't it?, especially to a young woman, the more domestic aspect of it, like I'm hopeless at dressing them and bathing them, and ought like that...the only thing I could never do was the nappy aspect of it, which is a terrible thing to say but it's true"

Philip, age 63



Positioning as a granddaughter

“I think they’re [grandchildren] in for a very difficult future, as all young people are, how old are you may I ask?

Me: 22, 23 next week

Well there you go, you’re obviously young enough to be a granddaughter of mine. Between [granddaughter] and yourself, there’s only eight years and that’s what brings it home to you. It does brighten your old age. We know people, we’ve known people all our lives who have been childless which is fine. You can have a lot more fun if you’re just on your own, without having to worry about kids, and you make a lot more money too, but they must be awfully lonely, when you get older, when there’s just you and your wife”

Jim, age 62



Researcher positionalities

- Researcher positionalities are not always knowable but this is an important aspect of the research process, worthy of analysis,
- Positionalities are often plural, moving us beyond the insider/outsider binary,
- These multiple positionalities and forms of ‘betweenness’ shape the research outcomes – what information is afforded and in producing silences,

Tarrant, A. (2014) Negotiating multiple positionalities in the interview setting; researching across gender and generational boundaries, *The Professional Geographer*, 66 (3): 493-500.