

**Mixed feelings when interviewing ex-clients confronted with sexual boundary crossings during their psychotherapy**

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ABSTRACT : Undisclosed issues in qualitative research – emotional issues

**Mixed feelings when interviewing ex- clients confronted with sexual boundary crossings during their psychotherapy.**

Ex-clients, confronted with sexual boundary crossings by their psychotherapists, are interviewed for a PhD research project. The researcher is confronted with several mixed feelings, due to those interviews.

Firstly, this can be caused by the delicate and emotional nature of the interview-topic, which possibly undermines to some extent the objectivity and critical view of the researcher, consequently giving incongruent feelings to the researcher. Because the ex-client allows the researcher to enter their home and is willing to talk about extremely emotional and private issues, the researcher is tended to be highly emphatic (instead of detached), which increases inappropriate supportive feelings to the ex-client.

Secondly, coping with sensitive information is difficult, because of the awareness that revealing the identity of the psychotherapist to others can substantially harm the ex-client as well as the psychotherapist. It goes beyond usually being confidential with the received information. The researcher feels burdened with keeping secrets. Besides that, the researcher feels helpless because intervening in the (probable) malpractice of the psychotherapist is impossible.

In conclusion, due to interviews with persons revealing extremely delicate personal information researchers can experience feelings of incapability due to emotional involvement. On top of that, researchers can experience feelings of helplessness and feeling burdened with secrets, when the information is harmful to others. It is important to discuss how to address such difficult issues in qualitative research.