Using Reflexive Interviewing to Foster Deep Understanding of Research Participants’ Perspectives

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Abstract

It is usual that researchers, in the process of transcribing interviews or even during data analysis, realize that important issues were superficially mentioned by the interviewees, but for several possible reasons, these topics were not explored by the researcher in-depth or properly. It is also common during the interview to not realize that certain content evoked by the participants are connected to the research questions that originated the study. Similarly, some content brought in by the interviewees may seem confusing, contradictory, or even insufficient to be subjected to protocols of qualitative data analysis. This article aims to present a technique that allows researchers to have a deeper and more accurate understanding of the subjective topics that may emerge through a qualitative approach: the reflexive interview. This technique consists of the engagement of the interviewer and interviewee in the process of elaboration and collective understanding of the interviewee’s perspectives and experiences. Rather than only reporting their experiences descriptively, interviewees, with the support of interviewers, have the opportunity to share the meanings of the reality surrounding them and the events of their own lives, without being interpreted arbitrarily only by the interviewer. This article intends to conceptualize the reflexive interview, pointing out its benefits and the procedures necessary to employ it in a qualitative study. Two case studies are presented to the reader to illustrate the reflexivity processes that can engage participants through this resource, as well as how reflexive interviewing promotes a deep understanding of participants’ perspectives. Finally, general recommendations are provided, including examples of questions that can compose a script of a reflexive interview. It is hoped that this article provides a new resource for researchers interested in more accurately embodying participants’ perspectives and experiences.

Keywords
reflexive interview, qualitative study, general recommendations

Introduction

Interviewing is a technique widely used among researchers of the human sciences interested in understanding the subjective aspects of certain groups and social segments. In general, the main interest of the interviewer is to deeply understand how people perceive their realities and interpret the social phenomena that surround them (Bastos & Santos, 2013; Ludke & André, 2013). Thus, when well conducted, interviews enable interviewees to reveal their desires, feelings, prejudices, expectations, life projects, among many other topics that concern the interviewee’s own life (Paula, Padoin, Terra, Souza, & Cabral, 2014).

The content that emerges from interviews can be essential for informing intervention programs and public policies directed to certain segments, especially directed to communities that present particularities (Bennett, Zubrzycki, & Bacon, 2011; Cranmer, 2012). When people have the opportunity to express their ideas through interviews, topics that are under-explored can appear and redirect the services promoted by local institutions or even subsidize the construction of more assertive...
public policies (Leana, 2015; McLaughlin, 2015). The possibility of knowing the context of people’s lives through interviews can also redirect the researchers’ understanding of aspects related to human development and patterns of behavior that originate in certain cultural practices (Rogoff, 2005).

The use of interviews is recommended for people and groups who are reluctant to fill out forms (scales and questionnaires) or engage in other data collection strategies. In addition, interviews may be used as a research technique when the study design consists of exploring how participants themselves understand certain issues, according to their own thoughts and in their own words (Ferreira, 2014). People who are nonliterate and groups with physical limitations that affect the ability to participate in other methods of data collection may also benefit from this strategy of data gathering (Gomes & Altamor, 2016; Rodrigues et al., 2017).

Although the management of the technique may seem simple to more experienced researchers, graduate students and early-career researchers may present some misunderstandings that can have drastic implications for the study findings. Among the main mistakes are: (1) not taking adequate time to establish rapport and build trust, which could make the interviewee feel uncomfortable or afraid of sharing personal information; (2) structuring questions that resemble an interrogation; (3) insistence on themes and content that are not linked to the research object, producing data that do not respond to research questions; (4) demonstrating anxiety levels that indicate interviewer insecurity, making the environment for the interviewee uncomfortable (Back, 2007; Duarte, 2004; King & Horrocks, 2010).

In addition to the abovementioned problems, interviews employed in research present other methodological dilemmas. For example, researchers, in the process of transcribing the interviews or even during the data analysis stage, may realize that important issues were superficially mentioned by the interviewees, but for several possible reasons, these topics were not explored by the researcher in-depth or properly. It is common during the interview to not realize that certain content evoked by the participants is connected to the research questions that originated the study. Similarly, some content brought in by the interviewees may seem confusing, contradictory, or even insufficient to be subjected to protocols of qualitative data analysis (Read, 2018).

In these situations, it is common for researchers to think “I should have asked them to detail that information” or “If I had the opportunity to talk to them again, maybe I could better understand what they meant.” Due to some ethical and methodological issues, especially since more than one meeting with the interviewees in the research project was not planned, a “second chance” is not an option. In this way, the data gathered become insufficient once they do not allow the researchers to understand in-depth the participants’ accounts regarding the object of study, generating innocuous and little contributory research for the advancement of knowledge. This article aims to present a technique that allows researchers to have a deeper and more assertive understanding of the subjective topics that may emerge through a qualitative approach: the reflexive interview.

The Reflexive Interview as a Research Strategy

As already briefly presented, the use of interviews in research may constitute a procedure for collecting data that generate high levels of anxiety, both of the interviewer and of the interviewee (D’Espíndula & França, 2016). Due to occasional discomfort that may be caused by the technique and the use of certain equipment and resources (such as an electronic advice to record), interviews may formulate shallow responses (Partington, 2001), which prevent researchers from building a consistent understanding of the interviewees’ point of view.

It is also important to note that research involving sensitive issues such as studies that explore the perceptions and experiences of vulnerable populations or professionals who work with these populations may not feel comfortable discussing these issues in a single meeting (Decker, Naugle, Carter-Visscher, Bell, & Seifert, 2011; Graham, Powell, Thomas, & Anderson, 2017; Lordello & Silva, 2017). For example, a study published by Pessoa, Coimbra, and Koller (2017) with adolescents from the Brazilian context involved in drug trafficking highlighted the ethical and methodological challenges in conducting interviews with this population. The researchers reported that it took several encounters with the participants to gather substantial data circumscribed to their experiences in drug trafficking. Initially, participants believed that the researcher was a police investigator. In this case, the reflexive interview was necessary because it allowed the participants to establish a bond with the main researcher after minimizing anxiety and distrust.

In addition to establishing rapport and building trust, there are other reasons why researchers may want to interview participants numerous times. As Read (2018) notes, research exploring complex or obscure issues may warrant numerous sessions to allow interviewers and interviewees enough time to discuss issues relevant to the research question(s). Time constraints may prevent researchers from gathering adequate data in a single session. Additionally, researchers may want to verify or cross-check information provided during interviews as well as explore changes in participants (or circumstances that affect participants) over time (Read, 2018). Repeated interviews may also be used to engage participants in a reflexive process, which may promote culturally sensitive and responsive research and practices (Harper et al., 2016; Pessoa, Medeiros, Fonseca, & Lienbeberg, 2017).

The reflective interview consists of the engagement of the interviewer and interviewee in the process of elaboration and collective understanding of the subjective contents exposed by the interviewer (Yunes & Szymanski, 2005). Rather than only reporting their experiences descriptively, interviewees, with the support of interviewers, have the opportunity to share the meanings of the reality surrounding them and the events of their own lives, without being interpreted arbitrarily only by
the interviewer. Thus, it is a precondition that the interviewees be engaged in the process of reflexivity about their experiences, which means that they need to validate the content that has emerged as well as help the researchers to truly understand what they meant to say (Roulston, 2010; Yunes & Szymanski, 2005).

Reflexivity has the sense of reflecting on the speaker’s narrative, expressing the interviewer’s understanding of it, which is also a way of improving trustworthiness (Szymanski, 2001). In conventional interviews, usually conducted in a single meeting, the researchers normally interpret the data by themselves, without actually being sure that their interpretations are correct and linked to the intentions of the participants. On the other hand, the reflexive interview must necessarily occur in at least two meetings since the interviewers must reflect with the interviewee the interpretations that they built from the first meetings, giving the interviewee the opportunity to validate or refute such analyses.

Reflexive interviews allow participants to signal agreement, suggest changes, disagree about the interpretation, supplement information, or clarify obscure points that emerged upon previous contacts between interviewer and interviewee. Due to the variability of respondents’ reactions and especially depending on the subject of study and the research area, several reflexive interview sessions may be scheduled. In some cases, for example, sessions following the initial interview may focus on temporal cutoffs of the respondent’s life (e.g., perceptions of parental care in childhood, assessment of how life is currently and life projects for the future); another alternative, as explained in Figure 1, would be to explore interviewees’ developmental contexts in a more detailed way from the information obtained in the initial interview (e.g., interpersonal relationships in the family, school, and work).

In recent years, the use of reflexive interviews has become very popular in research conducted in Brazil (Gracino, 2018; Lourenço, 2015; Santos, 2018). Its use has been shown to be effective mainly in conducting studies with populations exposed to social vulnerability and with participants that require the establishment of more significant bonds with the researchers. Although a protocol to validate this technique has not been constructed yet, the objective of this article is to share with the readers its potential, evidenced by successful experiences when employing this resource.

**Case Studies Demonstrating the Potential of Reflexive Interviewing**

Research techniques that generate qualitative data, while having characteristics that differentiate them from quantitative studies, also require levels of reliability (Leung, 2015). This is the case of the conventional interview (usually held in a single meeting), which given the recognition of the academic community of its value, already occupies a prominent place in the studies in a range of areas (Seidman, 2013). Reflexive interviews are still in the initial exploration phase, which explains their still restricted use (if compared to other techniques).

This section aims to present two cases that illustrate how the use of reflexive interviews allows the deepening of the interviewees’ understanding of the phenomenon investigated, as well as explicitly the process of reflexivity that the participants may engage. These are two studies carried out in the Brazilian context, the first one with undergraduate students with disabilities and the second study with children with a history of school failure.

**Case 1—Undergraduate Student With a Disability**

The research was conducted by Santos (2018), and its objective was to understand undergraduate students with disabilities’ challenges to remaining in higher education, as well as the way that these institutions contributed to or hindered the resilience processes of this group. The participants were seven students, aged 19–32 years old, who were enrolled in public or private universities in a medium-sized city located in São Paulo state, Brazil. The reflexive interview was used as the main resource for the fieldwork. This means that the researcher had already foreseen, during the planning of the research project, that more than one meeting could be held with the participants. This information was presented to the ethics committee that evaluated the proposal as well as emphasized to the participants who did not oppose to the procedures presented to them and agreed to participate voluntarily.

The data collected during the first interview was with a participant called Júlia (fictitious name), a 20-year-old, undergraduate student of psychology with a visual impairment. The participant, as well as the other interviewees, opted for the interviews to take place in the university that she was attending.
in opposite periods of her classes or after other academic activities. Although she was enrolled in the university over 2 years, Juíla presented several problems of displacement in the institution’s buildings. Prior to the first interview session, for example, Juíla got lost due to the lack of adaptation within the buildings of the institution and needed help walking into the building where the researcher was waiting for her. Despite Juíla’s difficulty initially observed by the researcher due to the lack of adaptation within the buildings, surprisingly she evaluated her university in a very positive way, claiming that she did not identify any problems in the institution. She even compared her current situation to the context of high school, which, according to the interviewee, used to impose more barriers than the university.

Researcher: What is the biggest difference you find in high school and here at the university?
Juíla: So, in high school, I had no support at all. The material was not adapted, and I couldn’t scan the books to read. I had no idea how to do this. It was a mess! Here in the college, it’s different. In college, besides having the equipment for us to adapt our own material, I met many people who knew how to do it in other ways. So, I ended up learning a lot. . . . It doesn’t even compare! The university is a thousand times better!

Researcher: Do the teachers adapt the materials you need?
Juíla: I usually adapt the materials myself. Sometimes, when they give some work in the classroom and the material is not adapted, I sit with someone who helps me. This is how it works, but they do not adapt.

As noted, in the first interview, Juíla mentioned that she felt that the environment in the university was appropriate for her. Her assertions suggested that pedagogical activities in the university were adapted to her needs and also that there were people who provided support when she needed it. Paradoxically, in the continuity of the interview, the participant indicated that the professors do not adapt the pedagogical resources and that the activities require from her the creation of strategies to get involved in the class. This theme, by itself, could be extensively explored in a reflexive interview session since it showed a contradiction in the interviewee’s narrative. But in the sequence, the researcher noticed additional topics of interest.

Juíla: I’ve always had to turn around a lot, you know. So, I would say that I always had to take care of myself . . . . because I believe that when you want to do something, something that you really like, the difficulties do not interfere, you just do it. You will find a way to do.

Researcher: When you have challenges at university, how do you deal with them?
Juíla: Like I told you . . . sometimes the materials are not adapted to my needs, but then I always find a way to adapt them. I ask someone for help to get access and the person reads to me. Actually, I cannot think of challenges here . . . I always had to do a lot to get to study. Here in the college everything is very simple, because I do some things. Of course I give my best . . . . it makes everything to turn very simple in the college.

The quotes indicate that Juíla feels solely responsible for her success in the activities that she usually performs at the university. She categorically affirmed that she depends strictly on herself to develop personal strategies to overcome the adversities imposed by her visual impairment. Perhaps because of this, when asked about her difficulties in staying at the university, the interviewee did not find elements to provide to the researcher. If data collection had been limited to a single interview, probably the conclusion obtained through her interview would lead the researchers to understand that universities have offered adequate conditions for the inclusion of people with disabilities (according to the perspective of Juíla).

However, as scheduled in the project, the researcher and her supervisor made a pre-analysis of the material that emerged in the initial interview (as indicated by Szymanski, 2001; Yunes & Szymanski, 2005). The objective of this stage was to raise topics superficially described by the interviewee, as well as identify contradictions in her discourse. Then, a new semi-structured interview form was developed, based on the content provided by Juíla in the first interview. In the case of this script, the interviewee should always be informed about the reasons that led the researcher to formulate new questions. In the two examples described below, it is noted that before the question is elaborated, there is a resumption of the content emitted by the interviewee in the previous session.

Researcher: At our first meeting, you said that you exchange a lot of information with some visually impaired people here in town and that they help you a lot. How do you think these conversations or these people contribute to your permanence at college?
Researcher: [. . . .] later you said that maybe you would have difficulties working in certain areas because a professor of yours said that. What happened during your classes at college that made you realize that you might have this difficulty later, after you finished the undergraduate course?

During the first session of the reflexive interview, the interviewee seemed to be more comfortable and relaxed. She started to elaborate more complex and deep answers and to criticize elements of college environment that did not appear in her narratives at first. She introduced, for example, how uncomfortable she used to feel when the coordinator of her course administered her test in a separate room from her classmates. Because she needs specific software to fill out the answer sheet, the argument presented by the coordinator is that the student could use the computer to “cheat” on the exam.
The discomfort caused in the student by the practices adopted by the coordinator of the course was not mentioned during the initial interview. As the research questions were related to students with disabilities’ perceptions of what helps them to remain in higher education, it was fundamental to conduct the reflexive interview to capture more assertively the perceptions of Júlia. This content, for example, helped the researchers to understand the exclusionary pedagogical practices that occur with students with disabilities in the universities (including the attitudes from the coordinator of the undergraduate course) and has composed a central category in the findings of this qualitative study.

A few days after the first session of the reflexive interview, Júlia decided to contact the researcher by e-mail. In the message, the student reported that in the last few days, she had been thinking a lot about some of the questions that had been asked to her. She also informed the researcher that she had some ideas on the inclusion of students with disabilities at the university and would like to share with the researcher. Although she was not very specific in the message about her ideas, it was intriguing that she mentioned that she was “thinking about some questions in the last few days,” after the reflexive interview. If Júlia agreed, the researcher decided that this meeting would comprise the third session of the reflexive interview and the full conversation would also be recorded. The following is the transcription of the beginning of the second session of the reflexive interview:

**Interviewee:** I even understand her point of view about being afraid in case I cheated on the exam. But I don’t know... I think it’s unnecessary for two reasons: first, if I cheat, I’d be tricking myself. So, it does not make any sense. And second, they could buy an adapted notebook, so I could stay in the classroom with the other students. They should purchase a computer with no content... any files of mine. So they would be sure that I wouldn’t cheat. I think it would be reasonable for everyone.

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**Researcher:** And did you talk to coordinator about this?

**Júlia:** No. The coordinator of my course is not very nice. I’ve had problems with her in terms of resource accessibility. Do you remember that I told you that she was kind of tough? Well, if I talk to her, I know it’s going to take a while, and I knew another professor would solve it faster. So, I preferred to talk to her.

Júlia’s engagement in the research highlights the process of reflexivity that the interviewers provoke in the participants. The reflexivity is related to the spontaneous and active involvement of the interviewee in the fieldwork, who feels mobilized to answer questions about their own experiences. Thus, the technique should focus on reflection and critical thinking about the interviewee’s daily experiences. It should also allow the resumption of content, which, after the critical exercise of the interviewees, can be refuted, reaffirmed, and even complemented.

This case exemplifies the process of reflexivity made possible by the reflexive interview technique but also points to the reliability that the technique gives the researchers to perform interpretation. The interviewee reiterated that the course coordinator does not have an adequate posture and that she does not see her as a professional she can trust. Criticisms of some of the university’s exclusionary practices appeared in Júlia’s narratives only after her engagement in the reflexive interview.

**Case 2—Child With a History of School Failure**

The second case refers to the use of reflexive interviewing in a study with children with a history of school failure, as evidenced by several disapprovals and nonappropriation of written language (Gracino, 2018). The objective of this investigation was to analyze the meanings attributed to the school by children who presented a history of school failure. The fieldwork was conducted through a combination of techniques: play sessions, initial interview, production of drawings (based on visual methods), and, finally, reflexive interviewing. Although the use of several procedures produced extensive material pertinent to the objective of the study, some topics were unclear. This dispersion of data brought some difficulties for the researcher to interpret the meanings that the school may have contributed to in the lives of students with a history of school failure. Several themes could only be clarified with the insertion of the last technique (the reflexive interview).
After the transcription of all the material collected in the previous stages (play session, initial interview, and drawing production), the researcher and her supervisor, similarly to what was previously cited in Santos’s research (2018), performed a pre-analysis of all the information obtained. Next, the most relevant topics were listed and explored more in-depth. Thus, this study combined several qualitative techniques, culminating in the conduction of reflexive interviews in its last phase. Taking into account the psychological functioning of the children who participated in the study and the complex relationship they had with the school context, this combination demonstrated to be valuable and certainly allowed the evocation of significant information on children’s school trajectories.

During one of the drawing sessions, for example, Margarida (pseudonym), one of the participants (a girl, 9 years old, reproofed twice at school), drew an image that portrays the context of her classroom, including herself, the peers, and the teacher. The participant described the conversation that she was having with the teacher in the drawing. According to her description, the teacher was trying to convince Margarida that “school activities are not boring.” Margarida, in turn, contradicts her teacher and declares that “it is really boring.” The student also explained that the other students portrayed are happy because they know how to do the activities that the teacher proposes, but she feels sad because she is unable to complete the activities (see Figure 2).

During one of the play sessions, the researcher asked Margarida what she does when she realizes that she is having difficulty performing an activity proposed by the teacher. Margarida stated: “I tell my teacher that I have a stomachache and I go to the bathroom.” Escape seemed to become Margarida’s way to cope with performance difficulty. Supposedly, she was ashamed of not being able to carry out the proposed activities at school. But her account was unclear and analyses required more consistent facts from her narrative. The techniques employed until this stage of the research provided only partial evidence of the conflicts within Margarida’s school context, marked by difficulty in carrying out the school activities, which negatively affected her interpersonal relationships (she also described how she was stigmatized by her peers for not learning properly). One of the goals was also to verify Margarida’s expectations in other dimensions of schooling, such as the learning process.

Given the relevance of the content brought by Margarida during the drawing session, the researcher decided to further explore these data during the reflexive interview:

Researcher: Margarida, I was listening to the tapes of the conversation we had some weeks ago, while you were drawing. Remember that? In some moments, you spoke about the math class and the Portuguese class, which you think is very difficult. I think I did not quite understand. Could you please explain to me why you like math and dislike Portuguese classes?

Margarida: In the Portuguese language, I always gain little. Gain little? Little what?

Researcher: The grade. In math, I get a grade a little better. I just wanted to get a 10 [maximum grade]. Only once would be enough. Or it could even be five, a blue grade [blue grade means the minimum to pass in the exams].

Researcher: Don’t you get a blue grade in Portuguese exams?

Margarida: No, only red note [under 5.0]. Like 4, 2, you get it?

Researcher: I got it. And the red grade means you have failed in the school?

Margarida: Yes. They want to see if your marks are good enough. If they say that my tests are good, then my grade will be good too. So, I can go to the next year... I really need to improve in Portuguese.

Although Margarida had shared relevant information about her relationship with the school context during the initial stages of the research, the reflexive interview allowed the appearance of content not explored yet, as presented in the excerpt transcribed above. The student clarified in the reflexive interview that she prefers mathematics instead of Portuguese classes because in the first she can obtain enough grades to be approved. On the other hand, Portuguese classes are permeated...
by failures and suffering, given that the Margarida has not yet been able to acquire the writing skills. These reported difficulties reportedly frustrate Margarida and make the school environment unpleasant.

This case shows that the use of reflexive interviewing in combination with other qualitative techniques can be configured as an efficient strategy for conducting research with children who usually present more difficulties orally expressing the meaning of their experiences and how certain events affect their lives.

**Recommendations for the Use of Reflexive Interviewing**

While technical and procedural recommendations can be given and researchers who utilize reflexive interviewing tend to improve with practice, it is important to emphasize that all research has limitations inherent to the methods employed. Regardless of the nature of the study, the techniques, or the resources available, researchers must recognize these limitations as well as the fact that research strategies provide only a partial view of the phenomenon analyzed. By recognizing these aspects, the researchers increase the chances of validating the contributions of the study and elucidating underexplored dimensions that deserve new investments by the scientific community. Despite this, general recommendations can be given to researchers who are planning to collect data from the use of reflexive interviews. Table 1 summarizes this information:

In addition to these general recommendations, researchers can reflect on the structure of questions that can compose the script of reflexive interviews. Based on research by Santos (2018), Gracino (2018), and Yunes and Szymanski (2005), the following are some recommendations for how to construct different types of questions in a reflexive interview, with illustrative questions:

- **In-depth questions.** These questions seek to elucidate elements of topics that have arisen in earlier stages of data collection. Through in-depth questions, details are sought to better understand how the participants feel and interpret the events or contents brought in the narratives. Perhaps it is the type of question most used in the technique of reflexive interviewing.

Interviewer: You told me that you do not feel safe in the neighborhood you are living and sometimes you are afraid to leave your place to go to school or work. What situations have already occurred there that made you feel scared?

- **Clarification questions.** This is an approach used when issues are obscure and the researchers consider it is necessary to ask the interviewees to explain certain subjects that do not seem logical or, at the time of the pre-analysis of the data, seem confusing. They may be associated with themes that appeared at different times of the interview and that seem to have a connection.

Interviewer: In our last conversation, you said that young people who are involved in drug trafficking have only three alternatives: “death, prison, or coffin.” What exactly do these expressions mean?

- **Confirmatory questions.** These questions mainly address possible interpretations that the researchers made of the content brought by the interviewee and help to clarify if the interviewer’s understanding is consistent with the intentionality given by the interviewee.
Interviewer: You mentioned in our last interview that your dreams came true in the last 4 years and it brought you a lot of happiness. Were you referring to the end of your college and the birth of your first child?

- **Question to organize chronological events.** Depending on the purpose of the research, to be clear about the sequence that certain events occurred is relevant. The interviewer can recount the chronology of these events and make sure that he/she/they understood how the events of the interviewee’s life happened. Complementary techniques can be used simultaneously (such as timeline). It is also possible from the sequence of the event to explore with the interviewee if there is connection between the events described.

Interviewer: You told me that several events occurred in your life last year and made you feel sad. I remember you mentioned the death of your mother, the time you became unemployed, the ending of your relationship and other situations. Can you describe to me the sequence in which these events occurred in your life?

- **Question to explain contradictions.** This form of questioning usually consists of two or more themes that emerged from previous interview sessions that reveal contradictions in the interviewee’s narratives. The interviewer must return to the contradictory statements and ask the interviewee to explain the contradictions. The interviewer should be careful to not raise questions that are intended to reveal supposed lies or to suggest that the interviewee has not been honest at other times of data collection.

Interviewer: In our first interview, you stated that you have a difficult relationship with your mother. But I noticed that, at the end of our conversation, you said that she is the person who you trust most and who is always giving you support when you need it. Maybe I did not quite understand what you wanted to express. Could you please explain to me better how you value your relationship with your mother?

- **Question to elicit reflections since the previous interview.** This question gives research participants the opportunity to share thoughts and feedback they may have had since the previous interview.

Interviewer: During the first interview, we discussed your experiences prior to becoming a mental health service provider in your current work setting. After reflecting on that interview and the questions I asked, as well as your responses, what thoughts would you like to share before we begin Interview 2, which is about your experiences in your current position?

These are general recommendations for researchers who seek to use reflexive interviewing in conducting qualitative studies. Obviously, these are general recommendations and not always possible to use. The content of the initial interviews will be decisive in guiding the choices of the researchers in the elaboration of the questions that will compose the script of the reflexive interviews.

**Conclusions**

This article aimed to present the reflexive interview technique and to highlight its potential in qualitative studies. This technique has been shown to be efficient in research with populations placed at risk, with participants who are resistant and with respondents who need more than one meeting to establish trust bonds with the researcher. In addition, the combination of qualitative techniques in addition to the use of reflexive interviewing deserves to be highlighted positively as well, especially in research with children.

Although this article has brought empirical data (through two case studies) to show how the reflexive interview allows the researcher greater depth in the content evoked by the interviewees, no validation studies of the technique have been performed yet, so there are no protocols to guide its use. However, the arguments presented in this article can support and direct the validation studies. These initiatives may represent greater reliability in the technique and may ensure to the researchers trustworthy in their studies. The article also provided to the readers some examples of how to organize questions that may promote participants’ reflexivity. These examples are not fully generalizable to any qualitative study, nor are they the only possibilities to structure a script. The questions of reflexive interviews will always depend on the content evoked by the participants and the research questions that originated the investigation.

Perhaps the greatest merit of this technique is the value of grasping, in a reliable way, the participants’ perception of their own lives and social events that surround them. Assertively validating the participant’s perspective strengthens the social and scientific relevance of the research, as it may imply the breaking of arbitrary analyses conducted solely by the researchers.

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