

“IF I HAD KNOWN, I WOULDN’T HAVE COME”: IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES OF QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW¹

Luiza Sionek^{2 3}, Orcid: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3368-3384>

Dafne Thaissa Mineguel Assis³, Orcid: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0856-3460>

Joanneliese de Lucas Freitas³, Orcid: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0856-3460>

ABSTRACT. Since the interview is a technique that favors the investigation of meaning, it is one of the most used tools in qualitative research, requiring a study on its uses. This article aimed to discuss the challenges for the researcher in the use of the qualitative interview and possible implications for the interviewed. Our analysis, based on excerpts from interviews drawn from different research projects, focused on two aspects: 1. The relationship between researcher and participant, and 2. Possible implications for the interviewee. We argue that the researcher-participant intersubjective field constitutes the interview, with contextual variability and influences that preclude the possibility of complete control of the process by the investigator, conferring an active role to both interactors. Concerning the implications for the interviewee, we point out that the interview is an opportunity for the participant to reveal previously untold experiences, and that, by revisiting his/her history; the narrator may change his/her perspective about it and about him/herself. These aspects turn the interview into a moment of sensemaking and not a mere report, which may also imply the mobilization of unelaborated affections. Given these issues, we note that the interview may concomitantly present to the participant the risk of suffering as well as the possibility of making new understandings about their experiences. We conclude that from an ethical point of view, considering as well the viability of the research, the interviewer must display not only the required theoretical and methodological knowledge but also acceptance and empathy, whereas the participant must show availability and trust.

Keywords: Qualitative research; ethics; interview.

“SE EU SOUBESSE, NÃO TERIA VINDO”: IMPLICAÇÕES E DESAFIOS DA ENTREVISTA QUALITATIVA

RESUMO. Por se tratar de uma técnica que privilegia a investigação do sentido, a entrevista é uma das ferramentas mais utilizadas em pesquisas qualitativas. Faz-se necessária, portanto, uma reflexão sobre seu uso. O objetivo deste artigo é discutir os desafios, para a equipe de pesquisa, na utilização da entrevista qualitativa e seus possíveis impactos a pessoa entrevistada. A análise, sustentada em trechos de entrevistas extraídos de diferentes projetos, debruçou-se sobre dois aspectos: 1. a relação entre pesquisadores e participantes; e 2. possíveis implicações para

¹ Support and funding: Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (Capes).

² E-mail: luizasionek@gmail.com

³ Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR), Curitiba-PR, Brazil.



entrevistados. Discute-se que a entrevista se constitui no campo intersubjetivo pesquisador-participante, com variabilidades e influências contextuais, que estão para além da possibilidade de controle total sobre o processo, evidenciando o papel ativo de ambos no acontecimento da entrevista. A respeito das implicações, observa-se que a entrevista possibilita um momento oportuno para a expressão de experiências não reveladas em outros contextos e que, ao revisitar sua história, a percepção sobre ela e sobre si pode se alterar ao longo da narração. Estes aspectos fazem com que a entrevista seja momento de constituição de sentidos e não de mero relato, o que pode também implicar mobilização de afetos. Diante dessas questões, nota-se que a entrevista pode oferecer, concomitantemente, risco de sofrimento e possibilidade de resignificação para os participantes. Concluimos que, tanto do ponto de vista ético quanto da viabilidade da pesquisa, é necessário para a condução da entrevista conhecimento teórico-metodológico, acolhimento e empatia, bem como disponibilidade e confiança por parte de quem narra sua história.

Palavras-chave: Pesquisa qualitativa; ética; entrevista.

“SI SUPIERA, NO ESTARÍA AQUÍ”: IMPLICACIONES Y DESAFÍOS DE LA ENTREVISTA CUALITATIVA

RESUMEN. Por tratarse de una técnica que privilegia la investigación del sentido, la entrevista es una de las herramientas más utilizadas en investigaciones cualitativas, configurándose necesario la reflexión sobre su uso como instrumento. El objetivo del presente artículo es discutir los desafíos para el investigador en la entrevista cualitativa y posibles impactos para el participante-entrevistado. El análisis, fundamentada en extractos de entrevistas retirados de diferentes proyectos, se centró en dos aspectos: 1. La relación entre investigador y participante y 2. Posibles implicaciones para el entrevistado. Se discute que la entrevista se constituye en el campo intersubjetivo investigador-investigado, con variabilidades e influencias contextuales que están más allá de la posibilidad de control total del investigador sobre el proceso, evidenciando el papel activo de ambos en el acontecimiento de la entrevista. Con respecto a las implicaciones, se observa que la entrevista es oportunidad de expresar experiencias no reveladas en otros contextos y que, al revisar su historia, la percepción del narrador sobre ella y sobre sí mismo puede cambiar. Estos aspectos hacen de la entrevista momento de constitución de sentidos y no mero relato, lo que puede también implicar en la movilización de afectos no elaborados. Ante estas cuestiones, se nota que la entrevista puede ofrecer concomitantemente riesgo de sufrimiento y posibilidad de resignificación para el participante. Concluimos que, tanto desde el punto de vista ético, como de la viabilidad de la investigación, es necesario al entrevistador no sólo el conocimiento teórico-metodológico, sino también acogida y empatía, y por parte del participante, disponibilidad y confianza.

Palabras clave: Investigación cualitativa; ética; entrevista.

Introduction

“Yeah, I thought it would not touch me that much [...]”. This sentence said by an interviewee catalyzed the discussions in our research group about the relationships between

researchers and participants, and also the management of qualitative research in psychology and social sciences. Being a group that works with phenomenological qualitative research in psychology, which often encompasses significant issues about people's lives, current or already experienced, it was essential to reflect on the impact of participating in an interview. Although qualitative research includes a vast number of different epistemological perspectives, the interview is undoubtedly the most frequently used technique in qualitative studies, with minor modifications in its procedures (Brinkmann, 2013; Wolgemuth et al., 2015).

The interview has become a widely used tool in the human and social sciences as it is a privileged method for the investigation of meaning. Understanding the meanings and senses of phenomena is the main objective of qualitative research (Turato, 2005), whose epistemological foundation is the recognition of subjectivity and symbolic and intersubjective fields (Minayo, 2017). Although qualitative research uses different sources and different data processing, as well as various collection strategies, there is a common purpose among them: "[...] to understand the meaning or internal logic that subjects attribute to their actions, representations, feelings, opinions and beliefs" (Minayo & Guerriero, 2014, p. 1105). Thus, participating in a qualitative interview requires openness to lived experiences, which may be potentially disturbing, especially when the theme of the interview concerns sensitive content (Alsaawi, 2014; Thompson & Chambers, 2012).

Brinkmann (2013) points out that researchers usually show little interest in the function of interviews and in its role as a social practice that produces knowledge. Nevertheless, the specialized literature has already been dedicated to reflecting on the experience of participating in a qualitative interview in the most diverse areas of social sciences, pointing out risks and benefits of this participation (Wolgemuth et al., 2015). Moreover, this is a problem that potentially involves ethical issues that are especially important in the construction of a project, as foreseen, for example, on Resolution 510, of April 7, 2016, of the Brazilian National Health Council (Conselho Nacional de Saúde - CNS) (Resolução..., 2016), which provides on standards applicable to research in the Human and Social Sciences in Brazil. According to Wolgemuth et al. (2015), the risks and benefits of qualitative interviews do not appear to be associated with specific methods or epistemologies, but rather with the conduct of qualitative interviews, whether semi-structured or unstructured, although risks are not always clear to research teams.

The research on qualitative research assumes that the data from an interview are produced in the intersubjective relationship between who participates and who investigates, so that the interviewer has a crucial role in this process (Andrade & Holanda, 2010; Minayo & Guerriero, 2014), thus not occupying a neutral position of mere observer of the phenomenon to be studied. In this sense, the interviews are characterized as social and subjective encounters, in which the dialogue between the participants is a singular event when experiences and phenomena meanings are gradually instituted, unfolded, and investigated. As someone tells his/her story, he/she can revisit experiences, with their joys, difficulties, and feelings, being able to perceive nuances about his/her experiences that were not clear and that gain new contours. Therefore, it may be an affectively touching experience that may engender anxiety to the interviewee, which the interviewer needs to be alert and warned about (Peixoto & Freitas, 2016).

Like interviewers, interviewees also play an active role in the interview. This active role is not always clear to the formers, not only because the participant, while answering an interview produces a narrative concerning what was asked, but because of the way they conduct their speech along this process, sometimes resisting to some issues and

procedures (Kizlari & Fouseki, 2018). The study by Wolgemuth et al. (2015) points out that participants in qualitative interviews perceive them as emotionally intense, stressful, and sometimes painful, but also cathartic, producing higher self-awareness and a sense of empowerment, often promoting relief and giving voice to underprivileged populations.

In this context, this article aims to discuss the challenges for researchers in the use of qualitative interviews and possible impacts for participants, highlighting positive and negative aspects. To this end, as a starting point, we used excerpts from interviews conducted in different studies of the same research group.

Method

Although this article aims to discuss theoretical and practical problems involving open qualitative interviews and does not fit as a research report, we use excerpts from research interviews to clarify and support our considerations and arguments. The interview excerpts used for the discussion are part of the database of the 'Fundamental Psychopathology Laboratory', referring to several projects of the research group: 'The grief and its interfaces', and were conducted between 2012 and 2018. Thus, the interviews used are part of the research that investigates grief experiences in bereavement. All of them were conducted individually, started from a trigger question, were open interviews, and had no structured script. Each one of them took place in a single meeting, lasting approximately one hour, in a private room at the Center of Applied Psychology (CPA) of the Federal University of Paraná in Brazil (UFPR) and was supervised by one of the authors. Knowing that the interview could cause suffering or embarrassment to the participants, it was clarified their participation would be voluntary, and that could be interrupted at any time, without any harm or loss. All participants signed the Informed Consent Form (ICF). Each project was separately approved by the UFPR ethics committee⁴, and all ethical conducts were taken, according to CNS resolutions 466/2012 and 510/2016.

Importantly, to minimize potential risks, the research group proposes counseling encounters after the interview, offering acceptance and, occasionally, referral for psychological care at the CPA. Interviewees can also request this service, even a few days after the interview. Also, our practice is to contact them one week after the interview to check how they feel regarding its content and to reinforce care availability. Moreover, whenever offered, no one felt the need for referral.

The interviews used here were selected because they mention some aspects of engagement in the research process. Namely, the excerpts used were not from interviews conducted to understand aspects of the use of this tool and its implications for the interviewed. However, they provided rich material that supported our discussions. Once the interviews were selected, the excerpts that explicitly referred to the research process were separated for analysis. At first, we analyzed the way the interview impacted the people involved, and then the different passages were grouped based on their similarities. Finally, these excerpts were gathered qualitatively according to the content they referred to in two major axes, addressing the two main recurring themes: 1. The relevance of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, and 2. The discomforts, feelings, risks, and benefits of participation in qualitative interviews. This last axis, due to its fruitfulness and complexity, was broken down into three subthemes: a. The interview as an opportunity of self-

⁴ Number of projects approved by the Ethics Committee of UFPR/CAAE: 10891313.7.0000.0102; 56202316.0.0000.0102; 71548017.4.0000.0102

expression; b. The interview as potentially emotionally moving; and c. The interview as a possibility for new meanings about the experiences reported.

Discussion

The first axis of analysis, 'Researcher-Researched Relationship', seeks to reflect on this relationship and how some inherent elements may impact on the interview conduct and results. The second axis, namely, 'The Discomforts, Feelings, Risks, and Benefits of Participating in Qualitative Interviews', as its name describes, discusses the affects that may emerge in the qualitative interview, as well as their risks and benefits. This axis was broken down into three subthemes that allowed a discussion that encompassed different aspects involved in interviewing and the dimensions of the data that are beyond its immediate results but concern the subjective and personal processes involved, particularly the interviewed ones. Thus, the interview is discussed as a. an opportunity of expression; b. potentially emotionally moving; c. a possibility of new understandings about the experiences reported.

Researcher-researched relationship

In qualitative research, whether in psychology, social or health sciences, the reflection on the encounter between researchers and participants has enabled new understandings about the context in which different forms of knowledge production develop. The relationship between the cognizant subject and the object to be known can no longer be understood as a mere relationship between a subject which attempts to know and an object that presents itself to the one who knows since its 'object' is a 'subject'. Thus, a relationship is established between two subjects, opening an intersubjective and socially delimited field. This intersubjective field favors the emergence of affections and reports about everyday experiences. In this sense, the interview "[...] is not simply a data collection work, but always an 'interaction situation' in which the information given by the subjects can be profoundly affected by the nature of their relationships with the interviewer" (Minayo, 2004, p. 114, emphasis added). However, this relationship is not limited to the moment of the encounter and its singular dynamics but begins to be delimited by the recruitment strategies, the way research theme is announced, as well by what happens before the recording starts. Even some differences, such as social class, gender, age, or race, interfere with and modify this relationship and the result of the interview and its analysis (Alsaawi, 2014).

Training and preparation of interviewers also deserve attention and positively influence the establishment of rapport and the subsequent conduct of the interview. Commonly, it is often used a highly structured script as an attempt to deal with these issues. However, the script serves only as a guide, as there is no way to control the course of the interview entirely, nor whether what is demanded or asked will actually be reported. Thus, it is not possible to foresee all the situations that may emerge, since this is a practice that is framed not only by planning, but also configured during the meeting, whether it happens face to face, via telephone or video calls, disclosing itself in the intersubjective field between interviewers and interviewees (Minayo, 2004). Rosenblatt (1995) points out that due to this unpredictability, it is impossible to inform participants of all risks of giving an interview, as well as to ensure that they fully understand them, even though all possible precautions and efforts should be made in this regard.

An interview conducted without proper ethical care without a solid theoretical and philosophical foundation, as well as the interviewer's lack of skill, can weaken the research

and induce results, and also offer risks and harm the interviewee. Denying the possibility of potential risks may be negligent, as even questions about marital status, kinship, age, and occupation may impact participants depending on their life history. Although considered simple, such questions may be embarrassing and unpleasant, such as in a situation where one does not know the name of his/her mother or father or has just been divorced (D'Espíndula & França, 2016). Moreover, not so explicit themes, such as gender, language, or social class differences, may impact narratives that are often ignored both at the interview and its analysis (Kizlari & Fouseki, 2018).

In most cases, interviewees and interviewers do not know each other previously, which may cause difficulties for researchers. Participants' lack of confidence in interviewers, lack of interest in research, and fear of addressing intimate, painful, or conflicting subjects with someone unknown (González Rey, 2005), require interviewers to be welcoming from the first contact. Therefore, it is impossible to say that the interview is risk-free, regardless of its degree of structure. On the other hand, participants are not passive in this process. Thus, it is naive not to realize the possibility of resistance to some procedures and questions, such as avoiding signing the consent form or even denying or quibbling in some answers (Kizlari & Fouseki, 2018).

Therefore, interviewers and interviewees play a crucial role in researching since the interview is not a mere data collection when someone mostly responds to a motto. In this sense, it is essential for the team to be aligned with the research objectives, the method, the theoretical framework, and the training to conduct the interview properly. This concerns both the interviewer's ability to ask appropriate questions that meet the proposed objective and deepen the report, as well as the listening, the acceptance, and the supporting skills required during the interview. It concerns as well the possibility of analyzing the interview not only from the explicit speech, understanding that the participant is also present and 'telling' something about the topic researched in their silences, refusals, and quibbling. This caution in training is essential to ensure both the feasibility of the study, an ethical and risk-sensitive conduct, as well as a careful and respectful analysis.

To illustrate the difficulty and subtleness of this relationship, we present an example that occurred in our research group. In two different studies about the experience of bereavement by suicide, recruitments were performed in the same group of bereaved, in which the same person volunteered to participate in both investigations. During one of the interviews, the participant reported that although she had previously made herself available, she refused to participate in the first inquiry, because in the telephone contact made to schedule the interview, the researcher used the term 'suicidal' to refer to her daughter, which deeply displeased her. Subsequently, she participated in the second investigation. At the end of the interview, when asked if she would like to say anything more about the topic of dialogue, she reveals:

[...] and the [researcher] went and said it [suicidal], and I said: 'I'm sorry, but in your interview, I don't want to talk, I can't talk in your interview', I didn't, I didn't go, you know, because she told me that word. [...] The [researcher] even called me: 'oh, I'm conducting a research like this, but about suicidal people'; '[researcher], I can't talk, I'm not fine, I won't go, I'm just going to disturb your study. Look for other people!'. Because of that word that hurts deep down, because as a mother, I don't accept it.

During her report, the participant made a point of explaining her first negative, knowing that the interviewers belonged to the same research group. Although the theme of both studies was similar (her experience of grieving her daughter's suicide), the invitation was accepted by her on the second contact because the researcher emphasized her interest

in knowing about her mourning experience without mentioning suicide, which allowed the participant openness and availability to participate. The interviewer welcomed this complaint and offered support. He also suggested talking to the research supervisor, whom she knew, which was rejected by her. This was one of the events that fostered the later writing of this study.

This episode demonstrates that being cautious with the interviewee pervades all moments in the research process: from the invitation to the completion of the research. It also demonstrates the fact that control and power over the interview are shared between the two parties involved. D'Espíndula and França (2016) point out that when conducting an interview, attention should be given to the choice of words and also to nonverbal elements of communication, such as signs of worry and tension or relief and comfort. Such attention should be present from the first contact with potential participants until the moment of the analysis. Thus, the interviewer needs to develop the ability to deal with emotional issues that may emerge, with the social significance of the topics he/she will work with, not only providing an atmosphere of reception, security, and understanding, but also openness to understanding and analyzing the different ways respondents engage in the interview, either by answering or resisting questions.

The interview and its impacts

The impacts of the interview can be varied. In order to discuss such possibilities, this axis was divided into three subthemes that emerged during the analysis of selected interview excerpts. The three subthemes were: The interview as an opportunity to interviewees of meaningful expression; as an event emotionally moving; and as an opportunity to articulate new senses about their experiences. The discussion of this axis, therefore, will be presented through these subthemes.

Opportunity of expression

As the interview is an invitation for the interviewee to talk about a specific theme of his/her life story, it becomes a unique opportunity for meaningful expression and thinking, or even for simple sharing of experiences. The atmosphere created by the invitation and the willingness of someone trained to listen may help the interviewee feel comfortable talking unreservedly about his/her experience. Notably, in interviews that have topics considered sensitive or taboo, such as bereavement, this fact may become even more evident, as one of the interviewees explained when talking about her gestational loss: "It's good to talk because it's my son... many people don't want to talk, but he is my son... he is... he is a part of me... he is... well, he is a piece of me...".

The literature points out that it is not uncommon for respondents to state that the interview provided them with an opportunity to talk about situations they had never spoken to before (Copes, Hochstetler, & Brown, 2012; Rosenblatt, 1995; Wolgemuth et al., 2015). One of our interviewees made it clear that she felt comfortable talking about something she was restricted in telling other people in other contexts. By reporting on her experience of gestational loss, she was able to expose her anger and envy at other women who had children, and even at her pet which had offspring at the time: "I think you are the first person I say that... this way... 'even the damn dog had puppies and I...'".

In this sense, we understand that the interview possibly provides a welcoming and secure moment to the interviewee that allows him/her to express aspects of his/her history,

as well as feelings about it that often cannot be expressed in other relationships. On the one hand, the invitation to the interview, which can be understood as a “I want to listen to you”, on the other hand, the trusting relationship which may be established during the interview, ensured by confidentiality, can make the interviewee feel listened without judgment and have his/her experience legitimized. Another participant on the gestational loss study reported that people in her social circle did not understand her suffering and did not validate her experience. At the end of her interview, she explained that she felt good about telling her story to someone interested and who allowed her to speak:

I say it is a pleasure for me to talk... it is a pleasure to be able to tell my story because it is not an ugly story. Is it sad? It is... sad... but maybe someone learns something from my sadness... So, like that, I don't feel sad, bad, when I speak, on the contrary, I feel light... it's another opportunity to be talking, and I like to talk just a little, isn't it? [laughs] So for me it's a great opportunity... always when someone makes room for me to talk... and let [emphasis] me talk... pay attention to it... I feel you understand what I'm talking about... it's good for me... I'm feeling very good...

Unlike other research methods, such as questionnaires, in the qualitative interview, there is a different context for the expression of experiences since it promotes, in addition to a listening opportunity, a report deepening. One of our interviewees stated that compared to her participation in other researches that used the questionnaire as a data collection tool, talking about her history and grieving experience in this type of interview was quite different:

This type of questionnaire doesn't have the same emotion as telling someone what you feel like. It's quite [emphasis] different. Because I've already answered some online bereavement[questionnaires] like this, and [it is like]: ‘Yes. No. And blah blah blah.’ Like, pretty easy, right? Because you don't... Don't experience all that in your head and heart. I think this is really different, and it's really nice to be able to, I don't know, participate.

While the questionnaire contains closed questions with predetermined answers, semi-structured or open interviews have the specificity of being a dialogue constituted as an intersubjective field, framed by a focal theme. The researchers develop the questions as they perceive and signify the way the interviewees' meanings are revealed by their speech, gestures, emotions, and reactions, which are gradually being perceived and signified by the researchers (Abrahams, 2017). Therefore, the interviewers have the role of offering acceptance and facilitating the participants' narrative through questions, even silences and gestures, that always emerge from the narrative, aligning together the research theme with what is narrated, and emerge from what the narrative itself arouses. Thus, the interview can be configured as a singular opportunity to expression, an intersubjective field constituted between researcher and participant, between what is said and what is heard, between what is revealed and what remains concealed as background, where the interviewer welcomes the said and the unsaid, searching the meaning of the interviewee about his/her history. Thus, the interview is often considered a safe place to talk about emotions that are often restrained (Wolgemuth et al., 2015) and can be seen as a possibility to express and be listened to, as well as offering an opportunity for resignification and self-reflection. On the other hand, revisiting one's history and allowing oneself to talk about one's experience can mobilize unpleasant, intense, and unforeseen affects, which we address in the following topic.

Affectively touching

To feel touched and moved by affects that may emerge is a relevant aspect in conducting interviews, but not always taken into account in the elaboration of procedures and questions, or even in analysis, so that many interviews with an intense expression of feelings can be perceived as unsuccessful. In our experience, we realize that being moved by emotions and affects is often a surprise to participants, but should not be to interviewers, especially non-beginners.

In an interview about gestational loss study, one participant stated: "It's an episode that... really, I kept it within those three months [of pregnancy], it's coming back now, so, talking to you. No, I left... I really hadn't thought about it anymore!". This phrase was said early in her interview, and before entering the room, she had announced to the interviewer that her grief was a straightforward topic and hoped to contribute to the research. However, as soon as she began to tell about her gestational loss, feelings, and emotional reactions that she had not expected arose. According to her report, after a new pregnancy, she had not talked about the loss anymore. She was surprised to find herself so touched: "I don't think I know it now... I had never mentioned it again [pause]. And, I thought it would not touch me so much. Really. For me, I thought it was easier". The interview unexpectedly was touching to her, and it can be said that facing her reactions was unfamiliar to her: "I was scared about having been touched that way because it had never happened again."

As discussed earlier, qualitative interviews are unpredictable, making it impossible to foresee all the emotions and affects that will arise when a past or present experience is reported, so interviewers must be attentive to respondents, providing support in both interviews, as well as after its conduct, safeguarding ethical conduct. According to D'Espíndula and França (2016), researchers commonly minimize the possibility of risk when the research is qualitative and uses interviews. What they consider to be a grave mistake since CNS Resolution 466 (Resolução..., 2012, inciso V) states that "[...] all research with human beings involves risk in varying types and gradations". Moreover, this resolution characterizes as a risk the "[...] possibility of damage to the physical, psychic, moral, intellectual, social, cultural or spiritual dimension of the human being, in any research arising from it" (Resolução..., 2012, inciso II.22). We understand that in qualitative interviews, in particular with sensitive subjects, the possibility of damage is significant; therefore, precautions should be taken to minimize it. Experiencing (or reexperiencing) these feelings can be painful and distressing, as long as this experience may be already somehow organized and with settled meanings. In this sense, the literature indicates the emergence of emotional pain as potentially harmful (Copes et al., 2013), which may imply resistance to some topics or the avoidance of some questions or even crying and giving up. The experience of participating in an interview can be interpreted as an evaluation, threat, annoyance, or invasion of privacy. Further, it would be naive to think that the affects that emerge during the report do not have consequences for participants after the interview, so it is crucial in research with specific themes to acknowledge complex scenarios, both of the possibility of reorganizing their feelings as well as of the existence of support network.

One of the participants in the gestational loss study reported that after the birth of her second child, she kept her feelings related to the loss in a 'little box' so that life could go on. However, participating in the interview ended up remembering her painful episodes, and she expressed being thrilled. Talking about her grief and allowing herself to be questioned led her to make contact with the experience of loss she lived before, and with feelings that were 'kept in a box' [sic]. That is, she had already instituted these feelings as history, as

background, veiled in the whole of the significance of her loss. She evidences that the contact with these feelings will not end after the interview, considering they will reverberate beyond this moment:

Interviewer: So, how are you feeling right now [about sharing her gestational loss]?

Participant: No, it's... like this, closing the box [laughs]. But it was good to talk about that too, right? Sometimes it's also good for you to manage it... I'll be more emotional [after the interview], that's for sure!

Another interviewee also made it clear that getting in touch with her experience was very poignant. The following excerpt came as the interviewer realized her emotion and asked what thrilled her: "Ahh... I think the feeling of reliving it all so specifically". Continuing this speech, as a way of caring for the participant, the interviewer recalled that she could interrupt the interview at any time if she wished, but her answer showed that her emotion was inherent in the narrative: "There's no problem, it's just emotion. And emotion is right there, there's no two ways about it [slight laugh]".

Note that reporting a singular experience is not trivial.

Another aspect that explicit how the interview is a technique that can be affectively moving was observed in some excerpts about how difficult it is to talk about lived experiences. One participant, reporting the loss of her father, stated that if she had been invited to the interview a few years earlier, she probably would have refused:

But before, so, if it were a few years ago, maybe I wouldn't have been here giving this interview, because maybe I couldn't, you know? It was tough. I avoided, if people talked about it, like, I [would say] 'Oh, I'm going to the cafeteria and I'll be right back', you know?! I don't want to listen because I know I can't handle it. So now it's much easier, not completely easy [emphasis], but it's easier than it once was.

From the same perspective, another participant considered if she had known the loss still touched her, she would not have accepted the invitation to participate: "Yeah, I thought it would not touch me that much... now that I'm bringing it to you, and today I'm talking about it and it's affecting. I... I didn't expect... maybe if I expected I wouldn't... I wouldn't be here [trembling voice]". Faced with the surprise of the emotion, the interviewer, besides reinforcing that they could end the interview at any moment, adopted a welcoming attitude and reinforced the commitment assumed in the ICF.

These facts make us consider the importance of research staff training, as stated earlier. We understand that this training goes beyond the practice of the interview, as it involves the study of the interview as a technique, its ethical, theoretical, and epistemological relations with the approach adopted and also its use in the context of academic research. Still, it encompasses the development of acceptance, openness, and care attitudes throughout the training, thus requiring the team to be prepared to deal with the most diverse situations. Thus, in agreement with D'Espíndula and França (2016), we understand that some questions need to be made about the process of elaborating qualitative research projects, in particular, and about the conduct of these interviews: What has been thought to minimize the risks with interviews? How clear is it to participants they may eventually experience discomfort, and the interview can be affectively moving? Has the ICF been a mere protocol to comply? We go further and add: How much do research staff prepare for interviews? How have they been concerned with developing skills in empathy for human suffering? Is there attention offered to participants, beyond the content of the report?

Opportunity to generate new meanings

The qualitative interview allows - and sometimes provokes - participants to revisit their history and, therefore, to experience emotions, and develop insights. When reporting their experience, they may confront aspects that were opaque to them and which are unveiled and perceived throughout the interview. Or again, they may confront situations and meanings known before, which gain another perspective in the course of the narrative. Facing one's own life or a particularly meaningful experience is an opportunity for resignification and embracing new perspectives, new meanings.

One of our interviewees reported that having the opportunity to talk about her various gestational losses and to organize her speech throughout the interview, permitted her to note, throughout her narrative, that sterilization performed after her five pregnancies took on a previously unnoticed meaning. According to her, the sterilization procedure was "[...] where the [pain] cure closed its cycle". She said: "I had never stopped to think about it, but talking here, now... No, really... it's... [I realize] sterilization was the endpoint of this cycle".

From this excerpt, it can be perceived that the interview should be thought of as a process that unveils new meanings, 'speaking' ones, full of senses, constituted in the relationship between the actuality of what is unveiled at the narration course and the previously established, previously meant. The interview is not a moment of mere data collection, but an opportunity for the unveiling of meanings. The related story finds echoes, breaks, and possibilities of exchange in the intersubjective encounter with the researchers, opening a new meaningful field. The narrative that is evident in this situation connects the interviewee to his/her memories and history, establishing new relationships between past experiences and his/her place in the present, as we can see in the speech of one of our interviewees in a study on the loss of parents during adolescence:

What, what thrills me [now], is because of remembering the things I've been through. So, to speak, let's say, what I feel today is... it doesn't bring sadness. It's more like that I miss him, but the sadness that hurts I don't have. It is more because of remembering those moments that hurt a lot in the past.

In the same vein, when answering at the end of her interview how she was feeling, another participant clarifies that her speech is not a story that is told based on facts, but rather a story that constitutes the tension between what she experienced and the meanings drawn at the time of the interview:

It touches me, but I must work it out and settle it down. Of course, when I leave [the interview], from the outside, [when] we meet the real world again, right... And [everything] goes back to our own way, and back to normal. But right now, at this moment, that little pain... is latent.

As mentioned earlier, there is a risk of the qualitative interview be emotionally and affectively moving, especially when examining a delicate experience such as mourning, which can be frightening and threatening, producing escapisms and resistances that must also, we remember, be analyzed. On the other hand, be moved by the narrative is not always necessarily unwanted or something to be avoided. The interview can create for the interviewees situations that involve constraints, as well as possibilities to explore new meanings. We understand that by retelling the story, there is a possibility that new meanings will be unveiled:

To narrate is to imprint a style on one's existence, is to disclose the possibilities of existential meaning in the intertwining between the possibility and the necessity within his/her history. The

self-understanding the narrative grants to the narrator, along with the resignification and transformation that it entails, is similar to what can be achieved with the clinical psychology process. That is, the narrative provides openness to unexplored dimensions of the self (Freitas & Peixoto, 2016, p. 150-151).

It is not intended to state here that clinical practice and research constitute the same work, nor could they; but that the institution of procedures cannot control the meaning-making process thoroughly. To tell your own story is to move between the innovation and sedimentation of narrative understandings of oneself and one own history. When we talk about something that concerns us and occupies us, there is always a position assumed, explicit to a greater or lesser extent. The more threatening the situation is, the higher the possibility of using clichés or crystallized meanings, what has already been said and repeated. What points to the openness, which an interview is, is the possibility to think about a significant theme, be it bereavement, a lived experience in the workplace, or the experience of becoming ill (Abrahams, 2017).

In one excerpt from the gestational loss study, one participant explains the openness that the interview could provide. She stated that at the time of the interview, she could realize a relationship between her grief and her affective proximity with her sister. Besides, she said she was surprised by her emotional reactions, asserting that she could not describe them. She later named them 'pain':

Interviewer: You said you didn't know what?

Participant: It hurts. So, it's... I think so. Because what... is going on here... I think it's pain... what I couldn't name; I think that's it... [long silence]

It cannot be said with certainty how it was for the interviewee to expose aspects of /her experience that were vague to her so far. We understand that there is a risk that this new meaning 'pain' was a harrowing experience. On the other hand, it may be assumed that this opening to new meanings, to some extent, produces significant changes and even eventually may be therapeutic, as pointed out by the findings of Wolgemuth et al. (2015) and Rosenblatt (1995). According to these studies, it is common for respondents to work on their own lived experiences during the interview spontaneously, to name and identify feelings, which often results in a feeling of catharsis, 'emotional cleansing', integration, and healing.

Final considerations

This article focused on the qualitative interview in order to reflect on this technique practice, highlighting implications for the interviewee and the challenges for the research team. Two aspects were relevant: the role that the relationship plays in this context and the power of the interview itself as an opportunity for self-expression, an affectively moving event, and an opening of new meanings. Since qualitative interviews seek to grasp the experience as understood and lived by participants, they have significant potential to be affectively and emotionally touching, which at the same time offer risks and new possibilities for the participants to develop and notice their lived experience and themselves.

Regarding the risks in the context of the interview, some points have to be considered. As discussed, when someone is retelling their own story, it is not possible to foresee someone's reaction. For this reason, in addition to knowing the tool they are using, interviewers must develop the ability to welcome occasional suffering and seek to know what

are the possible risks of their procedure, exploring ways to minimize them. We defend this aspect by assuming it as an ethical, not just epistemological issue. In our research group, we have the habit of contacting participants sometime after the interview. Contact is made mainly with those who have been most sensitive throughout the process in order to check how the person is, their emotions, and considerations about having shared such significant topics for themselves. When it is perceived that she is still deep touched by the interview, counseling is offered, as described, and even referrals to specific care services, if necessary. We do not want to suggest this as a single possibility to deal with any risks but to exemplify a possible way to deal with them, but it can also be flawed. What is noteworthy is the fact that research groups must not minimize the effects of a qualitative interview on people's lives, as if this were a neutral procedure without consequences.

Concerning the possibilities that participation in an interview may grant when reporting her experience and revisiting her life story, some experience a new way of looking at themselves and what was lived, allowing openness to the institution of new senses and resignification of those settled ones, previously constituted for themselves in their history. Moreover, the interview may become an opportunity for the expression of a lived experience that often does not find echoes in other contexts.

Given the above, it is required sensitivity and ethical responsibility in conducting the interview, in order to provide the necessary care. It is essential to consider everything since more simple issues such as availability of time and enabling environment, to more complex issues such as professional and personal ability to deal with the suffering of others, although we know that evaluating the latter is complicated and controversial, and is eventually a responsibility to all research group. The stance taken is indispensable for conducting an interview, not only from an ethical point of view but also from the perspective of the viability of the research since the lack of rigor can bias, conduct, or even make the research impossible, besides offer risks to participants. A good interview is beyond well-formulated questions and well-thought answers or responses that meet the interviewers' desire or anxiety. A good interview goes through, first of all, the attitude of acceptance, attention, and care towards the interviewee, their availability, commitment, and feeling of comfort. In this way, we reiterate that the interview constitutes an intersubjective field, showing active participation of both researchers and interviewees, enunciating not only the theme to be studied, but also the particular historical institutions of what is narrated, as well as the invisible institutions that permeate the relationships between both, such as gender and language, for example, which were not discussed here, but deserve attention from further studies.

References

- Abrahams, H. (2017). Listen to me: a reflection on practice in qualitative interviewing. *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, 1, 253-259. doi: 10.1332/239868017X15090095938377
- Alsaawi, A. (2014). A critical review of qualitative interviews. *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 3, 149-156. doi:10.2139/ssrn.2819536
- Andrade, C. C., & Holanda, A. F. (2010). Apontamentos sobre pesquisa qualitativa e pesquisa empírico-fenomenológica. *Estudos de Psicologia (Campinas)*, 27(2), 259-268. doi: 10.1590/S0103-166X2010000200013

- Brinkmann, S. (2013). *Qualitative interview*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Copes, H., Hochstetler, A., & Brown, A. (2013). Inmates' perceptions of the benefits and harm of prison interviews. *Field Methods*, 25(2), 182-196. doi: 10.1177/1525822X12465798
- D'Espíndula, T. S., & França, B. H. S. (2016). Aspectos éticos e bioéticos na entrevista em pesquisa: impacto na subjetividade. *Revista Bioética*, 24(3), 495-502. doi: 10.1590/1983-80422016243149
- González Rey, F. (2005). *Pesquisa qualitativa e subjetividade*. São Paulo, SP: Thomson.
- Kizlari, D., & Fouseki, K. (2018). Treating resistance as data in qualitative interviews. *The Qualitative Report*, 23(8), 1951-1961. Recuperado de: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol23/iss8/12>
- Minayo, M. C. S. (2017). Cientificidade, generalização e divulgação de estudos qualitativos. *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva*, 22(1), 16-17. doi: 10.1590/1413-81232017221.30302016
- Minayo, M. C. S. (2004). *O desafio do conhecimento: pesquisa qualitativa em saúde*. São Paulo, SP: Hucitec.
- Minayo, M. C. S., & Guerriero, I. C. Z. (2014). Reflexividade como éthos da pesquisa qualitativa. *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva*, 19(4), 1103-1112. doi: 10.1590/1413-81232014194.18912013
- Peixoto, T. R. T., & Freitas, J. L. (2016). Pesquisa com narrativas: uma proposta metodológica em psicologia fenomenológico-existencial. In M. J. D. Cardoso & A. F. Holanda. (Orgs.), *Psicanálise e fenomenologia: estudos e pesquisas clínicas* (p. 139-156). Curitiba, PR: Juruá.
- Resolução CNS nº 466, de 12 de dezembro de 2012. (2012). Aprova as diretrizes e normas regulamentadoras de pesquisas envolvendo seres humanos. Brasília, DF: Ministério da Saúde. Recuperado de: http://bvsms.saude.gov.br/bvs/saudelegis/cns/2013/res0466_12_12_2012.html
- Resolução CNS nº 510, de 07 de abril de 2016. Dispõe sobre as normas aplicáveis a pesquisas em Ciências Humanas e Sociais (CHS). Brasília, DF: Ministério da Saúde. Recuperado de: http://bvsms.saude.gov.br/bvs/saudelegis/cns/2016/res0510_07_04_2016.html
- Rosenblatt, P. C. (1995). Ethics of qualitative interviewing with grieving families. *Death Studies*, 19 (2), 139-155. doi:10.1080/07481189508252721
- Thompson, A. R., & Chambers, E. (2012). Ethical issues in qualitative mental health research. In D. Harper & A. R. Thompson (Orgs.), *Qualitative research methods in mental health and psychotherapy* (p. 23-37). Chichester, Eng : Wiley-Blackwell . doi: 10.1002/9781119973249.ch3
- Turato, E. R. (2005). Métodos qualitativos e quantitativos na área da saúde: definições, diferenças e seus objetos de pesquisa. *Revista de Saúde Pública*, 39(3), 507-514. doi: 10.1590/S0034-89102005000300025

Wolgemuth, J. R., Erdil-Moody, Z., Opsal, T., Cross, J. E., Kaanta, T., Dickmann, E. M., & Colomer, S. (2015). Participants' experiences of the qualitative interview: considering the importance of research paradigms. *Qualitative Research*, 15, 351-372. doi: 10.1177/1468794114524222

Received: Oct. 18, 2018

Approved: Jun. 24, 2019

Luiza Sionek: Master in Psychology, Universidade Federal do Parana (UFPR), Brazil.

Dafne Thaissa Mineguel Assis: Universidade Federal do Parana (UFPR), Brazil.

Joanneliese de Lucas Freitas: Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Universidade Federal do Parana (UFPR), Brazil