# A Call to Better Qual: The Science and Art of Interviewing

*Substantial efforts across the qualitative landscape of the Journal of Agricultural Education occur through interviewing. Yet little exists in our discipline to support rigorous use of this methodological tool. This practical manuscript uses philosophy, methodology, theory, our own experience, and wisdom from wide-ranging sources to provide a guide to both the art and science of interviewing for novice and advanced researchers alike. In exploring the science of interviewing, we outline question types, interpretive frameworks, interview structures, and methodological assumptions. In advancing the art of interviewing, we align with the CHE framework focusing on the connectivity, humanness, and empathy required to engage in research with our participants rather than on or about them. Finally, we conclude with a call for reflexivity as a unifying means of conducting rigorous, well-articulated, and deeply meaningful interviews as we continually strive to improve as research instruments.*

## Introduction

*"The quality of the craftsmanship results in products with knowledge claims that are so powerful and convincing in their own right that they, so to say, carry the validation with them, like a strong piece of art" (Kvale, 1996, p. 252).*

"We don't see things as they are. We see things as we are." We are people, and we need to be *fully* people to engage well in interviewing. While the opening quote is variously attributed (to Anais Nin or Shemuel ben Nachmani), it gets at the crux of a problem when conducting and reviewing qualitative research. Namely, the way we engage in the work is largely a function of "as we are" rather than "as they are." In other words, our work as qualitative researchers is a function of our self-development as a research instrument, more than a function of what participants share. This quandary begs us to consider how we develop as research instruments to bring "as they are" and "as we are" closer together, at least in supporting understanding, clarity, and quality in qualitative work. Our focus on interviewing recognizes engaging in qualitative work embodies a process of becoming and articulating that becoming process for the researcher. This process is often wrought with questions, confusion, and a multi-voicedness that can leave even the most experienced researchers frustrated about where to begin and how to become.

To engage with "becoming," it may be helpful to consider all the things we have become in our personal or professional lives that led to reading this manuscript. We taught classes, and somewhere along the line, *became* teachers. We conducted research, and through an ongoing process *became* or *are becoming* researchers. Even more personally, we might be runners, farmers, bloggers, guitar players, or photographers. First, we learned the rudimentary skills enabling us to do the most basic tasks required for the role. But at some point, *doing* the thing was not enough; we, in fact, *became* the thing. Our hobbies and our work not only define us, but they integrate themselves into our identities, blurring the lines between *who we are* and *what we do*. Consider the examples above; we may take a hundred pictures, but without intention, practice, and even some instruction and feedback, it is difficult to create the art making someone a photographer. In the same way, we seek to create art through the science of the interviewing process, moving beyond simply capturing data to truly becoming the research instrument ourselves (Guba et al., 1981; Merriam, 2002).

As we explore the science and art of research interviewing, we begin by reflecting on why this work matters. In 2024, updated Journal of Agricultural Education (JAE) review criterion became more inclusive of various types of research. Manuscripts submitted to the journal are currently evaluated for impact of contribution, academic rigor and accuracy, and style and structure. Reviewers are asked to consider if data collection utilized a rigorous approach; whether sufficient evidence exists to substantiate the article's claims. These criteria scream the need to maximize the quality of how we articulate designing, delivering, analyzing, and reporting qualitative interviews. This manuscript adds to the body of literature focused on improving research methods in the profession (Lindner et al., 2001; Miller, 1979; Miller 1998; Miller, 1994; Dooley, 2007; Roberts et al., 2011; Kitchel & Ball, 2014; Mott & Haddad, 2024). In 1998, Larry Miller's "Appropriate Analysis," stated "We do research. Statistics are the tools of the researcher, and we need to know our tools" (Miller, 1998; p.1). Today, more than 25 years later, we advance a similar argument for qualitative work. Interviews are an important tool of the qualitative researcher, and we need to know our tools to maximize their functionality.

It is only fair for us to provide some expectations before proceeding with this manuscript. While it begins with the standard Introduction section (and includes an embedded purpose statement), its structure is quite different from typical research, philosophical, or theoretical manuscripts. In place of a Methods or Findings section, you will find a heading and subheadings focused on the science and art of interviewing. This manuscript does not utilize research methods or findings in the traditional sense but highlights ways to improve our research methods based on literature and our personal experiences with research interviewing. Finally, the manuscript ends with "Concluding Thoughts," a section connecting the science and art of interviewing to offer implications regarding reflexivity for our readers. This manuscript is part philosophical, part methodological, part theoretical, but mostly practical--a tool designed to strengthen qualitative rigor.

As fellow researchers, the purpose of this manuscript is to inform those working through design decisions about interview processes, protocols, and questions, while urging researchers to consider the craftsmanship of themselves as a research instrument. We invite readers to lean into vulnerability as we outline some of our own shortcomings as examples and opportunities to accelerate potential growth for the future. Where do each of us (authors included) need fine tuning? How do we improve the quality of our own craftmanship? It should be up to each of us as scholars to reflect on our own manuscripts, considering how we have conducted and written about interviews and interviewing. Notably, these are different things. Our manuscript focuses largely on conducting interviews, but we encourage writers to articulate, to the extent allowed and limited, their interview decisions and processes to leave a map for other researchers.

## The Science and Art of Interviewing

We are both researchers at land-grant universities who regularly utilize interviews as a data collection tool for a variety of qualitative approaches. In terms of articulating our own positionality, we teach research methods courses and mentor undergraduate and graduate students learning to conduct social science research. We have experienced the challenges of balancing the science and art required to conduct quality interviews and utilizing those interviews to support rigorous and impactful qualitative work. Additionally, we have struggled as educators and mentors to help students understand there is much more to interviewing than simply developing and following a well-designed protocol. In our early attempts at research, we

also often neglected the *art* of interviewing because we were so focused on doing interviews "right." In retrospect, we wish we had focused more on reflexivity and responsiveness to participants in our own research. Essentially, this manuscript was born out of our pragmatic desire to be better interviewers ourselves and to provide a tool to others with similar desires.

## The Science of Interviewing

When we create art through our qualitative work, it helps to understand the *science* of the process. Just as a musician learns about chord progressions and rhythmic patterns, a painter studies color and texture, and a photographer the light and exposure, so an interviewer should aim to understand how their own actions facilitate other's ability to tell their stories (Glesne, 2016). We know from our own experience we often get so tangled in the science we lose the art of connection and inadvertently disrupt the story. In navigating the science, especially initially, we conducted clunky, awkward, interviews. We focused on asking "the right questions" in "the best way." We considered "where, when, how long, and how often" (Glesne, 2016, p. 109) to conduct interviews. Once we made those decisions, there were still many other questions to answer. Would they be in person or remote interviews? How would we establish rapport with our participants? What types of interview protocols could we use? As such, we worked very hard at choosing just the right word or phrase to make sure our interview questions would "answer" our research questions and sub-questions. We struggled with how many interview questions to include in our interview protocols and in what order to ask the questions. What kinds of questions should they be? Devil's advocate? Hypothetical? Situational? We were very focused on following all the rules to make sure we did it right. And this was absolutely necessary, albeit transactional. Perhaps you have found yourself in a similar situation.

Just as with any practice, skill development comes before seamlessness. Interviewing is a "systematic activity you can learn to do well" (Merriam, 2009, p. 87). Think about your own becoming in any hobby. Personally, I (Haddad) think of my own child learning to ride a bike. When he first started, he had to tell himself, out loud, to pedal. I would give him a push and he would yell, "PEDAL! PEDAL! PEDAL!" until falling over and needing to start again. Even after a few days, he went careening down the driveway without thinking about needing to pedal his feet anymore. Stopping was a different story. Similarly, as we progress in learning any new skill, the mechanics eventually become second nature, and we find ourselves effortlessly riding along as we develop our craft. In other words, we move from practice to practitioner. In a becoming sense, practice *makes* practitioner, with all its philosophical, methodological, practical, theoretical, and ethical assumptions.

Logistically speaking, it makes sense to start where most interviews begin: with a question of what should we ask? This naturally warrants a scientific response: it depends on how we approach the world and our specific study. Ontology, epistemology, and interpretive frameworks should be understood to support developing a rigorous study to elicit the data necessary for developing worthwhile conclusions. All our becoming will only get us so far if we do not attend to the reciprocal nature of designing protocols that elicit responses to help solve problems. As with anything, we begin with philosophical assumptions. Understanding our own worldview, or set of beliefs (Lincoln & Guba, 1994), has implications for every single decision we make throughout the research and dissemination process, including planning, conducting, and analyzing research interviews. We have outlined several interpretive frameworks and their aligning goals and implications in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.**

*Examples of Interpretive Frameworks, Researcher Goals, and Implications for Interviewing (Adapted from Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Roulston, 2010)*

| **Interpretive framework** | **Researcher goals** | **Implications for designing interview questions** |
|---|---|---|
| Postpositivism | Create new knowledge | • Interview questions are designed based on a priori theories<br>• Interview questions are often part of a mixed-methods approach focused on testing theories, specifying important variables, and making comparisons among groups. |
| Social constructivism | Understand the world of the participant, acknowledging the complexity of views | • Interview questions are designed to understand what it's like for each individual participant to live in the world<br>• Broad interview questions allow for new ideas to be co-constructed by the participants and researcher |
| Transformative/ Postmodern Frameworks | Act for societal improvements or change the way people think | • Interview questions are designed to understand the injustice experienced by marginalized groups<br>• Questions reflect the consideration of an action agenda, providing opportunities for participants to highlight issues and concerns |
| Pragmatism | Identify potential solutions to real-world problems | • Interviews are designed to understand what is useful, and explore how individual values impact perspectives<br>• Additional qualitative or quantitative data collection tools may be used alongside interviews to understand both objective and subjective evidence |
| Critical, Race, Feminist, Queer, Disability theories | Address inequities, transform lives, highlight suppressed voices, address inclusion | • Interview questions must explore the myriad complexities of individual identity<br>• Interview questions are asked in a way that reflects demographic categories are open, fluid, and nonfixed |

We also acknowledge that, in the process of determining what to ask, we will expose a great deal about ourselves, our positionality, and our assumptions. We must pay attention to these to develop questions worth answering. Our interpretive frameworks influence how we, as researchers, relate to our participants. For example, a postpositivist researcher will aim to maintain distance from the participants, attempting to control bias. A social constructivist, on the

other hand, will be much more open about their own background and experiences to co-construct reality. Our own philosophical assumptions are that previous experiences and perspectives cannot be set aside (i.e., bracketed), though some will make valiant and credible efforts to do so. For our part, we encourage qualitative researchers to reflect on, understand, and embrace their own positionality to help the reader understand the full work that has come about.

Interview questions should also be influenced by interpretive frameworks. While methodological approaches may require manuscripts to vary widely in how theory is used to support the research, there are several key questions and strategies to align our interview questions with the appropriate interpretive framework.

1. Are the questions supported by the literature and theoretical framework (when appropriate)? What data are required by the theoretical framework?
2. Do the interview questions align with and relate to the research questions?
3. Are the questions clear, singularly focused, and non-leading? Do they simply have yes/no answers like most of these do?
4. Are the questions written in the language of the participants? Beyond their literal language, is the jargon and technical cuing familiar? If the language is not familiar, is there a plan to onboard participants to the "dialect?"
5. Are participants asked to describe experiences or list items?
6. Are all questions grounded in reality? Is there room for hypothetical or antithetical questioning?
   (adapted from Glesne, 2016; Roulston, 2010)

Evaluating our decisions throughout the entire research process is an important way to help improve our future interviews. It is tempting to blame our participants when we have had a "less than stellar" interview. However, it is critical we remember the science we use to design and deliver our interviews will impact the quality of our participants' responses (Glesne, 2016). For example, I (Mott) remember listening back to early interviews I conducted, recognizing my own tendency to ask a follow-up question or probe too quickly (often at the exact moment the participant was getting ready to expand an answer). Dibley et al. (2020) refers to this disruptive leaping in as "speaking into the silence." Once I recognized this pattern, I could make sure I added more wait time, which immediately improved the rigor of the interviews.

Much like in the classroom, where effective learning is a shared responsibility between teacher and student, an insightful interview is the result of participant response *and* the skill of the interviewer (Glesne, 2016). While reflexivity is its own conversation later in this manuscript, we encourage interviewers to keep a record of decisions, not just observations, throughout the process of participant engagement.

## The Art of Interviewing

Like so many of the phenomena we explore, the science often gives us elements of the picture without composing the full image. To understand the full breadth of interviewing, we also need to embrace the art. We must move beyond the logistics and structure to, as Glesne (2016, p. 96) says, "make words fly." The art of interviewing lies in understanding and adapting to our participants to elicit insightful data with the potential to be transformational. While the

science of interviewing focuses on *what* we do as an interviewer, the art involves *how* we become a research instrument.

Based on our own processes in qualitative inquiry, we assume the idea of *becoming* may feel a bit daunting. Heightened levels of engagement and knowing pose a certain challenge to research efficiency. Thus, our ultimate goal shifts from production and efficiency to knowing, being, and meaning. Particularly as a process of becoming, interviewing is an art of decision-making, woven together to inform the tapestry of human experience. While several guides exist for progressing through the decisions leading up to the actual interview, we advocate here for the CHE framework advanced by Brown and Danaher (2017). The CHE principles of connectivity, humanness, and empathy provide an audit for our methodological decisions as we develop interview protocols, optimizing ethical and methodological opportunities.

*Connectivity* helps us identify ways to build rapport, comfort, and trust with participants. This can vary based on a variety of factors, including race, culture, age, sexual orientation, class, and location (Glesne, 2016), just to name a few. To that end, we encourage researchers to begin engagement with participants well before they send their first recruitment notice. Just as it is important for us to delve into who we are as researchers and position ourselves accordingly, it is critical to explore who our participants are, what their lifestyle is like, how they speak, what makes them comfortable, and what they easily relate to. Conducting pilot interviews with people who have similar characteristics to our intended participants can help novice researchers be better prepared for challenges that may arise (Malmqvist et al., 2019). Even beyond pilot interviews, we may need to spend time with the participants prior to interviewing just to know what they are about and to help establish rapport (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007).

Furthermore, we embrace the idea of *participation* differently when we focus on truly connecting with participants. A significant component of engaging participants relies on establishing and maintaining trust (Brown & Danaher, 2016). The power of understanding place (i.e., context), platform (i.e., where and how the interviews will be hosted), and form (i.e., style of conversation) all contribute to establishing trust on the front end. Beyond that, our platforms of engagement are integral to the process. This means considering both the practicality and reception of platforms by the particular group of participants. Additionally, we should think about ways to supplement interviews, regardless of platform. These supplements can help participants feel more natural during the interview while helping us better understand the problem.

For example, engaging in a conversational interview with an elderly farmer while walking along at chore time might feel far more comfortable for that participant (and result in far more impactful and interesting data) than conducting an interview with that same farmer via Zoom. However, a beginning agriculture teacher with a busy schedule might prefer utilizing technology to engage in a Zoom conversation because of the familiarity and time savings it affords. If that Zoom conversation happens in the classroom, there might even be contextual evidence in sight to further inform the interview. These examples are not meant to imply every qualitative study must engage in a prohibitively laborious process to evoke powerful insight. However, our engagement with participants has to consider ideals beyond convenience.

Considering *humanness* focuses on making intentional decisions to support relationship reciprocity and a balance of power between us and participants. Before participants have shared,

consider what the approach and philosophical assumptions demand returning to participants. For example, someone rooted in pragmatism or social constructivism may conduct member checks to gain participant input (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Other examples of sharing with participants to support the balance of power could include offering findings from the research back to participants or even providing potential problem-solving strategies (Davies, 2000; Patel-Stevens, 2004; Ash, 2003). Regardless of what the assumptions demand, maintaining clarity and transparency with participants ensures they have opportunities to *participate* in our research. We need to take equal care after data collection to continue engaging with our participants to further support reciprocity and balancing power.

We would be remiss, however, if we did not acknowledge this balance of power brings risk for the researcher. For example, conducting member checks may put researchers in an uncomfortable position when participants disagree with the analysis presented to them (Morse, 2015). Humanness is messy and embracing it means we acknowledge and anticipate how human nature both lends to our work and makes it more challenging. Specifically related to balancing power, we move out of the safe harbor of transactional story collecting and into the choppy waters of finding things our participants (as research partners) may not like. Sharing power means giving up power, and in my (Haddad) experience, it is something that has cost me participants, which also meant the loss of their perspective. Extending humanness—truly bringing participants into the research—means we share beyond our experience. It means we share our vulnerability, putting both ourselves and our work in the open, up for debate, and fraught with choices.

This balance of power also considers how we will elicit our participants' own process of reckoning (i.e., becoming) with the problem we explore. This is a connected, empathetic, and human endeavor (Brown & Danaher, 2017). Interview questions may not be enough to elicit articulation of the ideas and thoughts necessary to fully explore wicked problems and taboo topics. Revisiting methodological assumptions will prove a useful guide in determining what additional forms of data will be appropriate to draw out the full breadth of the phenomenon. Form, in this case, is the function. While focus groups may work well for topics people "could talk about to each other in their everyday lives-but don't" (MacNaughten & Myers, 2004, p. 65), individual interviews are probably a better choice for more sensitive or highly personal topics (Merriam, 2009). A focus group may work well for eliciting responses for one group of participants, but one-on-one interviews may work better for a different group (Merriam, 2009). Using creative forms including drawing, writing, and photo or artifacts may prompt something speech alone cannot, helping interviewers capture information and insight that cannot easily be put into words (Gauntlett, 2007). Creative forms help to activate memories, extend the length of interviews (Collier, 1957), and provide space for collaboration between the researcher and participant (Harper, 1994; Collier, 1995), promoting further alignment with philosophical assumptions.

Thinking about *empathy* means being observant and mindful of participant behaviors and responses, including non-verbal cues, and responding appropriately so as not to cause harm (Brown & Danaher, 2017). "We are human beings. Not human doings" (variously attributed). One of the most powerful ways we can engage in an interview is to be present ourselves. Doing (i.e., scribbling notes or typing on a laptop) during an interview can detract from the opportunity to participate in the interview ourselves. However, we cannot overlook the necessity of keeping a record of what happened; what we observed, what we thought, what we connected.

Considerations for the appropriateness of field notes (i.e., details, descriptions, what actually happened) or reflexive observations may start in interpretive frameworks or philosophical alignment but are carried into practicality through what participants see as appropriate. For example, I (Mott) know that if I must take notes around youth participants, I will be much less obvious if I use my cell phone than if I carry a notebook around with me. However, if I am conducting research with an older population my cell phone use might be seen as rude or disruptive. "Being" during an interview helps us be an empathetic and open listener that "gets" our participants.

At times we may hear things from participants we adamantly disagree with or feel very passionate about. I (Mott) have to remind myself that today I am only wearing my "researcher hat," as opposed to "teacher hat," "program leader hat," or "advisor hat," to keep my own tongue in check. Perhaps it is even harder to control body language and facial expressions as we struggle to retain an attitude of openness and "wide-awakeness" (Schutz, 1967; as cited in Greene, 1977). Practicing empathy involves seeing the world as others see it, staying out of judgement, recognizing others' feelings, and communicating understanding (Wiseman, 1996).

Empathetic listeners concentrate on being patient with probes and follow-ups so as not to accidentally interrupt. This becomes especially important in virtual interview spaces where it is nearly impossible to read body language. Respecting silence and recognizing it as an opportunity for participants to reflect (particularly with sensitive or meaningful topics) is an important aspect of active listening (McGrath et al., 2019). Slowing our own pace may help us focus more on the experience of the participant, opening opportunities for more: "more explanation, more clarification, description, or evaluation" (Glesne, 2016, p. 114). Prompts such as "tell me more," "I'd love to hear about it," or even, "what else," seem simple, but can be highly effective in eliciting more detailed insight from participants. Thoughtfully employing active listening skills while prioritizing the concerns of the participant may even "lead to unexpected turns that provide valuable learning" (Dibley et al., 2020, p. 97).

An important, albeit often-overlooked, aspect of interviewing is its dynamic process; as researchers follow the lead of participants utilizing semi-structured or even unstructured (i.e., conversational) interview protocols, unanticipated responses and events can occur. This begs for a discussion of research ethics, which involves much more than simply obtaining approval from an institutional review board (IRB). Our role is to listen, be empathetic and curious, have a good memory, and establish dialogue with participants (Bulpitt & Martin, 2010). Qualitative interviewers should be mindful not to cross into a therapeutic role when carrying out interviews about sensitive topics. Instead, we have to be prepared to maintain our role as the researcher while offering the participant connections to helpful resources if the need arises. As a final consideration, interviewers should be aware that conducting interviews about sensitive topics can be stressful or anxiety-provoking for participants but can also wear on the interviewer (Taquette & Borges da Matta Souza., 2022).

Connection, humanness, and empathy also demand a discussion of the ethical concerns inherent in exploring what interviews are designed to evoke. Different epistemological assumptions present different ethical concerns (Lincoln, 1990). For example, while conducting a series of conversational interviews over an extended period in the field may lead to participants oversharing, attempting to separate oneself to maintain objectivity may result in interviews

feeling sterile, not eliciting insightful information. Figure 2 highlights common ethical issues in research interviewing and offers recommendations about how to prepare for them.

**Figure 2.**

*Preparing for ethical issues in research interviewing (Adapted from Lazard & McAvoy., 2020; Taquette & Borges da Matta Souza., 2022)*

| **Potential ethical issue** | **How to prepare for ethical issue** |
|---|---|
| Discomfort for participants | • Prior to the interview, explain participants may discontinue the interview at any time they feel uncomfortable<br>• Ask the participant if they would like to proceed if they show signs of discomfort or distress during the interview<br>• Be prepared ahead of time to refer participants to appropriate resources or professionals if needed |
| Discomfort for interviewer | • Continually ask "What is the research process and how am I influencing it?"<br>• Utilize reflexive journaling to record thoughts, emotions, and concerns<br>• Allow recovery time for the interviewer between interviews |
| Conflation of roles (e.g., researcher, therapist, friend) | • Remember and reiterate the purpose of the interview<br>• Provide the participant an explanation of the role of the interviewer as part of the interview protocol<br>• Consider how the population may need additional help understanding the role of the researcher (i.e., youth, elderly participants with language or cognitive differences) |
| Threats to anonymity and confidentiality | • Understand the communities and cultures of participants to identify where breaches of confidentiality could occur<br>• Think about pre-existing relationships with participants and how these could challenge anonymity<br>• When writing findings, consider if information could breach confidentiality of people, programs, or communities |

As researchers, we simultaneously work to build trust with our participants; listening to hear data, attending to the flow of conversation, probing or asking follow-up questions when needed, and providing enough silence to encourage participants to share more. I (Mott) vividly remember the sheer exhilaration and simultaneous exhaustion I felt after hearing some fascinating (and heartbreaking) stories from participants about a sensitive topic during the first research interviews I had ever conducted. I do not, however, remember being warned in advance about how challenging the human connection aspect of interviewing could be, or the amount of energy being an empathetic interviewer requires. We are not born able to carry out all the tasks interviewing requires at a high level simultaneously, but we can improve ourselves as research instruments over time. Becoming a research instrument means acknowledging our own positionality, making informed choices about interview design, and practicing connectivity,

humanness, and empathy with our interview participants. In addition to all of this, we need to keep in mind how to adapt the science and art of our interviews to further hone our instrument for the next time we sit down with a participant.

## Concluding Thoughts: Reflexivity as Connecting Science and Art

At the end of the day, suggestion upon suggestion pile up as we attempt a process of becoming something we are wildly unfamiliar with until it becomes so natural we cannot help bringing it to every interaction. We share the above considerations, not as a prescriptive approach to study design, but as an outline of acting into thinking, and thus becoming. A guide moving readers (and us) from conducting interviews to *being* an interviewer; a remarkably-crafted and well-tuned research instrument.

We advance practicing reflexivity as the key ingredient to becoming a research instrument. Reflexivity is the glue bonding the science and art of interviewing together. Although the word reflexivity is variously defined (Olmos-Vega, 2023), the general concept involves taking notice of the researcher's role in research. It involves "a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of the researcher's positionality (Pillow, 2003). "Continual" is an important word in this definition; as researchers we should aspire to weave reflexivity throughout the entire research and writing process. Reflexivity goes well beyond a word appearing in the Methods section of a manuscript or appeasing an IRB review.

As a purely logistical practice, reflexivity in preparing for and conducting interviews helps us be prepared with proper resources and connections well in advance of talking with participants. Since people are not predictable, all interviews come with the risk of potential ethical issues for both researchers and participants. I (Mott) recall my involvement in a research project where parents signed consent paperwork for their teenager to participate in an interview and photo elicitation activity, but they later destroyed the photograph the participant was planning to bring to the interview. The teenager sadly told me his parents worried about someone noticing they did not have electricity in their house. I had not considered ahead of time the risks photographs could be to families living in poverty or thought about a parent limiting or editing the story the child wanted to tell me. Indeed, uniquely tailoring ethical considerations to specific groups of participants is a function and practice of reflexivity.

While we may be our own instrument, our best work is unlikely to occur in isolation (Hall et al., 2018). We enhance our reflexivity beyond a logistical endeavor by engaging peers who are both familiar and unfamiliar with the phenomenon, context, participants, and problem. This allows us to explore our biases in predictive and preventative ways. Arguably, we may not want to prevent all challenges to our study, as nuance and understanding sometimes emerge through "conflict." However, we must ensure appropriate ethical considerations if we choose to enter fully aware of the conflict we may incite. We cannot prevent every challenge, but intentional and shared reflexivity supports predicting or even preventing challenges before, during, and after interviews.

Being a *reflexive* interviewer throughout the entire research process goes well beyond simply utilizing *reflection* to think about interview details and identify insights that may inform findings. Walsh (2003) suggests qualitative researchers consider four types of reflexive practices throughout the entire research process; personal reflexivity, interpersonal reflexivity,

methodological reflexivity, and contextual reflexivity. For this manuscript, we relate these practices to research interviewing in particular (Figure 3).

**Figure 3.**

*Reflexivity Types and Questions for Consideration for Research Interviews (Adapted from Olmos-Vega et al., 2023; Walsh, 2003)*

| **Type of Reflexivity** | **Questions to Consider** |
|---|---|
| Personal | • How do my unique perspectives influence how I construct, deliver, and analyze/interpret interviews? |
| Interpersonal | • What relationships exist with and among participants?<br>• How could these relationships influence the research and people involved in the research?<br>• What power dynamics could be at play? |
| Methodological | • How am I making decisions about how to conduct interviews?<br>• What could be the implications of interviewing decisions I make?<br>• How do I construct interview questions in a way that aligns with my research paradigm?<br>• When and how might I need to adjust my interview processes to adapt to unforeseen circumstances that occur? |
| Contextual | • How could the context or setting of my interviews influence the research?<br>• Who could potentially be impacted by the research in this interview setting? |

It takes intentionality and planning to put reflexivity into action. Although we may mention reflexive writing such as memoing, field notes, or journaling in our research manuscripts (and may be practicing reflexive thinking at a high level), we often fail to explain what kinds of prompts helped promote our own reflexive thinking. Including this information helps reviewers understand the rigor of our research. Utilizing a reflexive stance not only impacts the research but changes the researcher with the passage of time, distance, and detachment from the research (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). At all times, we as interviewers need to remain reflexive and develop self-awareness of our own experiences and values, realizing how these things influence the research, the participants, and even ourselves. Practicing reflexivity in research interviewing can change how we hear, think, and even feel about the phenomenon at hand. A well-crafted research instrument (i.e., the person) can respond in time to changing perceptions and adapt the interview protocol to meet the situation.

I (Haddad) experienced this first-hand during an early research study as my committee warned me how hard it would be to interview in a community and with a phenomenon with which I was intimately familiar. The raised consciousness of all involved, including my own, not only challenged our understanding of the phenomenon, but it challenged our relationships with each other and our work in irreversible ways. In any interview, we are likely to see things we cannot unsee and hear things we cannot unhear, forever changing our interactions with the idea.

There will always be more story than we are able to access, and more story we access than we are able to share.

"All that you touch, you change. All that you change, changes you" (Butler, 1993, p. 3). When we talk about interviewing as a process of becoming, we acknowledge that interviewing, as an act, will change both us and our participants. Through this writing process, we have had to come to terms with our interviewing being informed both by the path left by interviewers before us and every interaction leading up to the interview. What we read, hear, see, and who we know all have an impact on our becoming. Our process of question development, participant observation, conducting interviews, and reflection (let alone data analysis and reporting) change how we see the phenomena we explore, and in turn, may change our analysis and interpretation of the phenomena. For our part, we find comfort in knowing the process of becoming an interviewer is never complete; we are constantly becoming research instruments—we never arrive. This attitude allows us to engage our participants as people instead of subjects, on their terms, and in settings matching what we hope they will share.

"We don't see things as they are. We see things as we are." And we are constantly working to explore an increasingly complex world. How we move forward through this complexity has immense opportunities to inform our connection to each other, the expansiveness of our humanity, and the empathy we both bring into interviewing and take from it. This nuanced understanding of wicked problems requires capturing high-quality data in all its forms, but for our particular approaches, in interviewing. We conclude with a call extending beyond research reflexivity and strong art and science: Engaging in rigorous qualitative work is as time-consuming as it is informative, something our current systems are often not well aligned with. Meaningful qualitative work will likely require some resistance against productivity and efficiency in the short term, but the longer-term results will be much more enjoyable and understandable if we allow ourselves time and space for *becoming*— to bridge "as we are" with "as they are."

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