

Article

Using Videorecording to Enhance the Development
of Novice Researchers' Interviewing Skills

Lisbeth Uhrenfeldt
University of Aarhus
Aarhus, Denmark

Barbara Paterson
University of New Brunswick
Fredericton, Canada

Elisabeth O. C. Hall
University of Aarhus
Aarhus, Denmark

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Abstract

Little has been written about how to teach novice researchers about qualitative research interviewing. In this article, the authors recognize qualitative research interviewing as a practice that one develops through reflexivity. They propose that novices can develop a reflexive interviewing practice by using a guided framework to review videorecords of the interviews they conduct. The authors discuss the framework and illustrate its use with an exemplar derived from the experience of a novice researcher. They conclude with a discussion of the need for further research about how best to enhance the development of novice researchers as qualitative research interviewers.

Keywords: interviewing, qualitative research, novice researcher, videotape, guided reflection, reflexivity

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In general, novice qualitative researchers do not receive formal training on qualitative research interviewing (Roulston, deMarrais, & Lewis, 2003). To become more effective as qualitative interviewers, qualitative researchers often rely on what they have learned in relevant literature (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2005; Kvale, 1996). They find inspiration through graduate courses about qualitative research (Barone et al., 2005; O'Keefe, Sawyer, & Robertson, 2004; Pfeiffer, Kosowicz, Holmboe, & Wang 2005) and through trial and error (Sargeant, Mann, & Ferrier, 2005). They frequently feel unprepared to deal with the unexpected challenges and complexities that different participants, research questions, and research settings present (Roulston et al., 2003).

A common adage is that practicing interviews will ultimately result in the development of expertise in interviewing skill (Donalek, 2005), expertise whereby the researcher manages to evaluate and address what a specific qualitative investigation “does for its participants, both researchers and researched—and for its consumers” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 280). However, reviewing one's practice might or might not promote improved performance toward expertise because different structures, organizations, or processes are efficient or beneficial in different situations (Albæk, 1996). In addition, novice researchers are often advised to review the transcripts of their interviews to reflect on changes that they should make in future interviews, but this strategy does not reveal the nuanced and less apparent elements of the interview process, such as the impact of the setting. Reviewing a transcript can expose the organization of the researcher's questions, the nature of the participant's and interviewer's statements, and the transitional statements made by both. However, it cannot readily reveal rapport between the interviewer and the participant, the nonverbal gestures and body positions of both, the influence of the timing of questions, or the context on the interview process.

In other fields in which interviewing is central, such as medical clinical history taking, there is considerable literature about how best to assist a novice in learning the skills of effective interviewing. Qualitative researchers have acknowledged that novices need to learn how to become effective interviewers and that this is a developmental process, but have rarely discussed the approaches or techniques that can effect this development. Inherent in much of this literature is the assumption that when novices reflect on their interviews, they will know both what to reflect on and what changes they should make because of their newly gained insights. However, novices typically focus on the readily observable and procedural aspects of interviewing, ignoring many of the important nuances and less evident or taken-for-granted components (Moyers, Martin, Manual, Hendrickson, & Miller, 2005). They are often unable to discern what they should reflect on or to interpret accurately the significance of different aspects of the interview (Moyers et al., 2005).

In this article, we will propose that novice researchers who videorecord their interviews can foster their development as interviewers if they use a framework to guide their reflections about what they see and hear in the videorecording. As videorecording reveals aspects of the interview that are not readily evident within a transcript, we will contribute a guided reflection framework derived from the relevant research-based literature and our

experience as qualitative researchers. This framework is designed to be used as a reflexive tool in combination with review of a videorecorded interview to enhance researchers' development as interviewers. In conclusion, we will discuss the use of videorecording to enhance interviewers' development and to provide directions for future research.

Background

Literature that is relevant to the development of qualitative research interviewing skills is derived from the following fields of study: (a) the teaching of interviewing in clinical settings, and (b) qualitative research interviewing.

Interviewing in clinical settings

Much discussion within the health care professional literature pertains to how students in these professions can be taught how to become skilled interviewers of patients. Although clinical interviewing has significant differences to qualitative research interviewing in terms of agendas and procedures (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006), the approaches to teaching clinical interviewing are useful for extrapolating the possible ways in which qualitative research interviewing may be taught and learned.

A number of strategies for teaching students in the health professions effective clinical interviewing skills have been reported, the most common being simulation, or "learning by doing" (Wilhelm, Craig, Glover, Allen, & Huffman, 2000), and videorecording. Simulation typically involves asking students to interview a peer in role-play and then reflect on the transcript of the interview and/or receive feedback from an expert who has observed the simulated interview (Aspegren & Lønberg-Madsen, 2005). For example, medical students in one university were taught how to interview people with cancer by being asked to respond to theoretical situations in which one student role-played the interviewer and the other played the patient (Bragard et al., 2006).

The major limitation of such an approach, however, is that students might be reluctant to talk about sensitive issues to a member of their social group and when observed by others, including the faculty member who assigns the course grade (Hand, 2003; McEvoy, 2001). Bragard and colleagues (2006) also raised the issue of whether such simulations would be transferable to the students' practice with patients. Simulated patients are often used to teaching clinical interviewing skills to health care professionals, but this strategy is expensive and time consuming (Mounsey, Bovbjerg, White, & Gazewood, 2006).

The major benefits of videorecording in the teaching of interviewing in patient situations have been recognized as the multifacetedness of video analysis; any particular exchange between the interviewer and the participant or the whole interaction can be analyzed in detail (Francis, 2004). The students can focus on one person, one role, or one recurring pattern, as well as search for evidence that points to the fact or negates that a particular issue exists in their interviewing (Francis, 2004).

In teaching clinical interviewing skills to medical students, researchers have concluded that videorecording the students' encounter with a patient can promote the development of interviewing skills (Bryson-Brockmann & Fischbein, 1995; Paul, Dawson, Lamphear, & Cheema, 1998). This is particularly effective when the student has the opportunity to review more than one videorecorded interview and has the opportunity to observe the markers of growth as an interviewer over time (Paul et al., 1998). Traditionally, such research has included watching the videorecord followed by feedback to the student from an expert interviewer. Some research has demonstrated that students are able to reflect independently on their performance and to arrive at useful insights, which they integrate in their interviewing provided they have clear guidelines about what they should observe, and what changes to their interviewing might be necessary because of these observations (Paul et al., 1998). Francis (2004) demonstrated that when students reflected on their videorecorded interviews in groups, they reported increased confidence in their ability to reflect independently on the videorecords of subsequent interviews.

There is considerable evidence that a novice counselor's self-evaluation of a videorecorded patient interview is often not accurate; self-evaluation must therefore be aligned with clear expectations about what novices should observe and how to make sense of what they see in the videotape (Rosengren, Baer, Hartzler, Dunn, & Wells, 2005). One study in psychiatry demonstrated that novices were often unable to recognize on a videorecord of their interview with a patient when they took too much control of the interview. They tended to avoid sensitive topics and to ask questions or make responses in a superficial manner. In addition, they were often passive or distant as interviewers (Rosengren et al., 2005). Rosengren and colleagues stressed that novices' reflexivity must be guided by a framework to assist them in recognizing these behaviors.

Researchers (Sargeant et al., 2005) in medicine have demonstrated the challenges inherent in an expert faculty member's providing feedback about a videorecorded interview. They have determined that the faculty member might not be regarded as credible or accurate by the novice. Feedback from an expert that is perceived as negative might not be integrated in the novice's practice because the novice doubts its relevance and authenticity. Other research (Pfeiffer et al., 2005) has demonstrated that faculty members often avoid giving negative feedback regarding videorecorded interviews when they are required to provide that feedback in person.

Videorecording novices' interviewing has been demonstrated to assist them in developing empathy with the person being interviewed as well as the techniques of prompting, paraphrasing, and encouraging interviewees to elaborate about their responses (Barone et al., 2005). Empathic skills are acknowledged by many researchers to be critical to effective interviewing of patients; these skills incorporate not only appreciating what the person is feeling at the time but also expressing that empathy to the patient and being able to receive empathy from the interviewee (Barone et al., 2005).

Interviewing in qualitative research

Much of the literature about qualitative research presents interviewing as a set of well-defined skills and competencies that can be taught to novice researchers in a combination of didactic and experiential learning. A popular method of teaching interviewing skills is for the novice to observe a skilled interviewer conduct an interview and then to return the demonstration. The expert interviewer provides feedback to the novice in a debriefing session. In such a session, the expert details observations about the techniques that the novice used and suggests alternative ways of framing questions or responses. Following the debriefing session, novices are encouraged to practice interviewing repeatedly until they get it right (Donalek, 2005); however, we know little about the efficacy of these techniques for the development of expertise in conducting qualitative research interviews. Most of what exists about teaching novice researchers about interviewing is a variation of the observe-do-debrief method of teaching interviewing. Role-play is often used as a substitute for an actual interview to observe (Elliot, Watson, & Harries, 2002). Debriefing is usually conducted individually, although it may be conducted in groups (Elliot et al., 2002).

The limitations of the observe-do-debrief method of teaching novices about qualitative research interviewing have been identified by only a few authors (e.g., Campbell, 2003), who have called for teaching approaches that would convey the values and philosophy of qualitative research in ways that socialize the novice to his or her role as an interviewer. Statements in much of the relevant literature suggest that novices continue after the initial observation-interview-debriefing to develop the skills of qualitative research interviewing by means of critical reflection. However, little guidance is provided on how novice researchers should reflect on the interviews they have conducted to ensure insights, which are essential to the critique of interviewing beyond the mere application of techniques (Francis, 2004).

A central theme in much of the literature about interviewing in qualitative research projects is the need for the interviewer to be reflexive (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Finlay & Gough, 2003; Freese, 1999; Schon, 1987). Schon believes that it is necessary for novices in any practice field, such as qualitative research interviewing, to be prepared for the artistry of the practice; that is, to develop skills of reflexivity so that he or she is equipped to reflect on and make sense of the surprises, uncertainties, and challenges that occur in practice. As Freese indicated, Schon defined reflection as “making sense of one’s experiences by deliberately and actively examining one’s thoughts and actions to arriving at new ways of understanding oneself” (p. 898) as an interviewer.

The core of such reflexivity in qualitative research interviewing is that through reflection on their practice, novices participate consciously and creatively in their personal development as interviewers (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Freese, 1999). For novice qualitative research interviewers to develop the practice of interviewing in a reflexive context, they must be able to question their epistemological and ontological understandings of the research (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). In addition, they must be able to move beyond the technical aspects of interviewing to be sensitive to the

experience and perspectives of the people they interview (Clarke, 2006; Doane, 2003). McAlpine, Weston, and Beauchamp (2002) described reflection in learning to interview as “a vehicle to learn from experience” (p. 405).

A number of authors have suggested ways in which novice interviewers might reflect on their interviewing practice. However, little exists about specific ways in which they might develop their skill as reflexive research interviewers. For example, Kvale (1996) drew on the metaphors of the interviewer as miner and traveler to suggest ways in which novices can frame their reflections about their interviewing. Fontana and Frey (2005) introduced novice interviewers to the notion of the interview as a collaborative practice leading to a “contextually bound and mutually created story—the interview” (p. 696). They detailed the components of an effective interview, such as an introduction, and suggested that novices should reflect on whether the components are enacted and how they are organized within the interview. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) called attention to the need for novices to be reflexive on both what the interview accomplishes and how the interview achieves this. Although such portrayals of the interview are helpful in eliciting insight about the art and complexity of interviewing, they are insufficient to guide novice researchers’ reflections about their interviewing to develop expertise as a reflexive interviewer. Roulston and colleagues (2003) stressed that to learn about the techniques of interviewing is one thing; to apply these principles in different contexts and with different participants is a separate task.

Videorecording is referred to within the qualitative research methods literature as a data collection strategy that permits the research to assume an outside view of the phenomenon under study (Paterson, Bottorff, & Hewatt, 2003). The use of this technology allows the researcher to review the videorecorded data in slow motion or in rapid speed, frame to frame, and as a microanalysis of behaviors, language, and interactions (Andersen & Adamsen, 2001). The videorecord strategy has been used by qualitative researchers to capture aspects of the social context of the phenomenon under study, such as the influence of others in the environment on the participant’s responses (Lotzkar & Bottorff, 2001). We could not locate any research that extrapolated these benefits to the development of novice researchers as reflexive interviewers.

Summary

It is evident in related research pertaining to the development of novices as interviewers that reflexivity is a critical component of their being able to discern pertinent insights in the review of their interviews, and novices who are provided clear guidelines about how to reflect on their practice as interviewers are able to contribute to their development. Although the techniques of interviewing can be taught through a number of approaches, such as simulation, these methods do not adequately prepare novice researchers to initiate reflection following an interview or teach them how to assess or foster their development as a qualitative research interviewer (Roulston et al., 2003). When novices are guided in their reflections about a videorecorded interview they conducted, they are able to gain insights about their interviewing that extend those offered in a review of a transcript or feedback offered by an expert interviewer. The literature pertaining to the development of

novice researchers as reflexive interviewers has been extremely limited in the field of qualitative research. There is a significant need for approaches that can be used by novices to foster their development as reflexive interviewers in qualitative research.

Guided reflection framework

The following framework to guide the reflexive review of a videorecorded qualitative research interview has been derived from the authors' experience as qualitative research interviewers and the relevant literature. The framework is intended to expand what novice researchers might learn in an analysis of the interview transcripts by reflecting on aspects of the interview that cannot be readily captured in a typed copy of the interview. It is designed to enhance novice researchers' reflexivity about such aspects in the qualitative research interview and to foster their development as reflexive interviewers. Reflexivity in this context involves the acknowledgement that qualitative researchers are a part of the social world they study and that being able to review a videotaped interview reflexively requires the necessary supports to identify areas of reflection and the appropriate follow-up (Ahern, 1999).

The framework draws heavily on the work of Whiteley and colleagues (1998), who identified three components of the qualitative research interview that cannot readily be captured in a typed transcript of the interview: paralinguistics, proxemics, and timing. We have added an additional component, context, which in our experience as qualitative researchers has been significant in shaping our responses as interviewers. In this context, reflexivity is deemed to be both personal and epistemological (Willig, 2001). Personal reflexivity involves exploring how our values, experiences, interests, beliefs, agendas, and social identities have influenced how the participant responds in the interview. Epistemological reflexivity involves asking questions such as How has the way in which I posed the question influenced the participant's response? How did the way in which I asked questions influence what the participant told me? and What contextual and other influences (e.g., perceived power differential; emotional valence of topic) might have influenced how the participant responded in the interview? In keeping with research about the conditions that foster the improvement of performance following reflexive activity, the use of the framework requires that novices engage actively in the reflexive exercise by examining the interview and its context in a setting that is without undue distraction (Broekhuis & Veldkamp, 2007).

Paralinguistic communication

Paralinguistics can include (a) body gestures and positioning, including facial gestures; (b) the voice tone and pitch, including lowering or elevating the voice; and (c) speed and quantity of speech (Donalek, 2005). For example, a researcher who is conducting an interview about patients' participation in disease management could review the videorecorded interview and consider what the difference might have been in the participant's response if the researcher had emphasized the word "doctor" instead of "not" in the following question: What would you do if the doctor did *not* do what you thought was best? The videotape might also reveal when the researcher has not attended

to the participant's paralinguistics, such as the twitch of a cheek or an abrupt change in posture when certain questions are posed. This, in turn, might lead to a decision to revise the question or to probe the responses to such questions in greater depth.

Proxemics

Another element of the reflective framework is proxemics: the perception and use of intimate, personal, social, and public space in particular settings (Hall, 1974). Proxemics is often a clue about the participant's comfort with the interviewer, with the questions asked by the interviewer, and with the process of being interviewed. For example, the participant might lean forward toward the interviewer and look directly at the interviewer when eager to answer a particular question and when feeling at ease in the interview. Novices could investigate proxemics in the videotaped interview by observing the eye contact between the interviewer and the participant (e.g., Did the participant look down or away from the interviewer at any point in the interview? If so, what caused that to happen?). Participants who look away from the interviewer might be assuming a subordinate position in response to the perceived power differential between them and the researcher. However, there are a myriad of other reasons why limited eye contact might occur, including cultural norms of behavior.

Another facet of proxemics that can be observed in a videorecord of an interview is the physical distance between the interviewer and the participant (e.g., Did the interviewer lean forward toward the participant at certain times? Did the participant fidget or move his or her chair away from the interviewer at any time?). For example, the novice might be able to detect that the space between interviewer and participant appeared to be excessive (i.e., greater than what is normally considered as appropriate when conversing with someone about personal or sensitive issues, suggesting an impersonal distance or a desire on the part of either party to distance from the other). Further reflection will be required to determine if it was the researcher or the participant who established this space, the rationale for this, and its influence on the interview process on the part of both the interviewer and the participant.

Timing

The timing of the questions and responses in the interview is the third element of the reflective framework. Timing is observable in a videorecorded rendition of the interview; this is difficult to discern in a transcript, however, particularly if a voice-activated recorder was used. Pauses, hesitations, and distracted speaking by the participant are often evidence of the difficulty a participant experiences in responding to the interviewer's question; this can be related to the participant's confusion about the intent of the question, his or her searching for a "right" answer, or the sensitivity of the topic (Whiteley et al., 1998). If the interviewer demonstrates these timing features, the novice can reflect on the researcher's intent and the impact of the timing on the participant's response. For example, an interviewer's pauses might be a reflection of his or her intent to mentally organize his or her thoughts, to signal a change in topic or focus in the questioning, or to elicit elaboration on the participant's response. It might also indicate

that the interviewer is distracted (e.g., checking the list of research questions to make sure that they have been covered). It is important when novices observe timing issues that they then look for evidence of the participant's response to these (e.g., Was pausing an effective way of eliciting more in-depth responses from the participant? If not, why not? Were the pauses too long? Too frequent?).

The context of the interview

The final element of the reflective framework is context: the circumstances and conditions that surround the interview. The video recorder can be positioned to capture the immediate environment, and later the researcher who reviews the videorecorded interview might be able to observe the context of the interview and its influence on both the interviewer's and the participant's responses. The context often holds clues as to why participants change their responses or appear less than eager to discuss certain topics. For example, when a family member enters the room in which the interview is taking place, the participant might be reluctant to discuss how the family has not met his or her needs for support. Observing what else was happening in the context at the time of the interview might be helpful in making further sense of some of the paralinguistic, proxemics, or timing cues that are evident in the videotape. For example, if the participant appeared to be relaxed in her posture and then abruptly sat up in the chair and crossed her arms, observing the context might reveal if anything happened that triggered those responses.

In summary

The framework is designed to elicit reflexivity in the review of a videorecorded interview, particularly with regard to what the paralinguistic, proxemics, timing, and context of the interview reveal about the interview process and the novice's interviewing skills. It might also help novices to discern their assumptions and taken-for-granted ideas in interviewing and about researching the phenomenon of interest. The use of the framework does not provide definitive answers to the interviewer's questions but does prompt novice researchers to reflect on the impact of these aspects of the interview and what they might do in future to change their interviewing approaches or the nature of the interview questions.

An illustration

To illustrate the framework, we present the following scenario derived from Lisbeth Uhrenfeldt's (LU) experience as a doctoral student initiating her dissertation research about the impact of charge nurses on proficient bedside nurses' job satisfaction and retention in Denmark. The research was designed to entail several interviews about a politically charged topic. Before she began her data collection, LU decided to conduct a pilot interview to test the efficacy of her interview process and to determine whether changes were necessary to her interviewing style. The participant who agreed to participate in the pilot interview was a nurse but not a charge nurse. The pilot interview was videorecorded.

LU had planned the interview in accordance with what she had learned from salient texts and her professors about qualitative research interviews. At first, she reviewed the videorecord and made note of several components of the interview that could be revised. For example, she identified that three of the questions were oblique and difficult for the participant. However, when LU attempted to review the videorecord in depth, she arrived at significant insights about aspects of the interview that were not readily transparent in a review of the transcript of the interview.

LU began her review of the video recording by watching the video at regular speed. She made notes about the answers to the questions that pertain to the paralinguistic, proxemics, timing, and context in the interview. Then the videorecord was speeded up so that it was on rapid speed in fast forward, and LU made note of any significant changes in the participant's or own (LU) paralinguistic and proxemics, as well as changes to the context. Notes were made of where on the tape these occurred, and later LU studied these points in the tape in freeze-frame, at slow speed, and at regular speed, observing if and how these changes were reflected in the interview process.

LU was able to see that pauses or breaks occurred in her eye contact with the participant each time she looked down at her papers in her lap to ensure that she was covering the interview questions. Her focus on the interview questions rather than on the participant caused her to not to recognize times when she should have prompted the participant to offer clarification or more detail about her responses. At one point, the participant offered that she had been concerned about something; LU simply nodded, looked down at her notes, and, after a small pause, went on to the next question. LU realized that she tended to ask another question as soon as the participant stopped a sentence instead of waiting or encouraging the interviewee to continue. At another point, the participant said, "In my work, I don't think it means anything if the nursing leader knows the patient or not. She is an experienced nurse and she knows how to support us, she develops her nursing knowledge." Instead of encouraging the participant to continue, LU asked her the next question on her list of questions: "Would you require a nursing leader to be a good nurse?" She recognized with some chagrin that the participant might have interpreted her firing questions as signaling that her statements were unimportant.

LU observed in the videorecord that this participant often took sips of tea as a way of signaling that she needed more time to think about her response; however, LU simply used these breaks as opportunities to pose more questions.

On reflection, LU recognized that she should have attended fully to the participant, encouraging her to elaborate and clarify her responses. After the participant indicated verbally or nonverbally that her response was complete, LU could then have looked at her questions, saying, "I will just check my notes to see if there are topics I have forgotten." She also realized that memorizing the questions beforehand would reduce her reliance on written notes.

Discussion

Qualitative research interviewing has traditionally been taught to novice qualitative researchers by focusing on the technical and practical aspects of interviewing; the textbook techniques of interviewing, as well as the strategies and hints offered by the novice's research supervisor, dominate such teaching. Interviews in qualitative research, however, are both philosophical and methodological, encompassing an art as well as a craft of interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). They extend beyond a recipe list of strategies and techniques, in that they are often complex, influenced by a myriad of contextual and personal factors, fluid and changing, and unpredictable (Francis, 2004; Hand, 2003; Hermanowicz, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). If novices are truly to understand and respond effectively to these attributes of the qualitative research interview, they must be able to reflect on their practice as interviewers in a way that acknowledges these.

In any practice field, there is a need to develop skills of reflexivity for novices to make sense of the surprises, uncertainties, and challenges in their practice. In the practice of interviewing, unpredictable and nuanced aspects exist that cannot be captured in an interview transcript and are often overlooked by novices. In this article, we have presented a reflexive framework to enhance the novice qualitative researcher's ability to develop as an expert interviewer by reviewing the videorecord of an interview first author has conducted. Such a framework addresses the limitations of relying on the review of interview transcripts to develop as a qualitative research interviewer. It also challenges the notion that one can become an expert qualitative research interviewer simply by conducting interviews (Donalek, 2003). The use of the framework is based on an assumption that novices' reflexivity must be guided to assist them in their development as qualitative research interviewers. In congruence with the notions of Finlay and Gough (2003), reflexivity in such a context is a tool that can transform subjectivity in interviewing from a problem to an opportunity for the novice to learn and grow.

The framework we propose has not been tested empirically, and future research should assess its efficacy in fostering the development of novice researchers' interviewing skills. Novices will have to learn the framework, but it is not yet clear what strategies for teaching the use of the framework are the best. In addition, there is a need for research that compares the contribution of the framework at different stages in the novice's development as an interviewer (e.g., after the first interview, after the 30th interview). The outcomes of the use of videorecord as a means of applying the framework should be contrasted with those involving observation by an expert interviewer of an interview conducted by a novice. The framework might also apply to videorecords of interviews other than those conducted by novices. For example, experienced interviewers might use the framework at times when they suspect that elements beyond the interview questions are contributing to participants' responding in particular ways in the interview. Such possibilities might be revealed in research about the use of the guided framework.

Conclusion

Learning how to interview is a complex and often challenging endeavor, but the strategies to assist novice researchers in developing their interviewing skill have been limited to date. We propose that as well as the approaches recommended by others, such as the review of the interview transcript and consultation with expert interviewers, the reflexive framework we offer herein not only will assist novices in detecting errors and the need for changes in their interviewing but will also support them in identifying markers of their growth as interviewers and in gaining insight about elements of the interview that are not immediately visible (e.g., power relations between the interviewer and the interviewee).

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