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## Using Paired Depth Interviews to Collect Qualitative Data

Angie D. Wilson

*University of North Texas, [angie.wilson@unt.edu](mailto:angie.wilson@unt.edu)*

Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie

*Sam Houston State University, [tonyonwuegbuzie@aol.com](mailto:tonyonwuegbuzie@aol.com)*

LaShondra P. Manning

*Texas A&M University - Commerce, [lmanning4@leomail.tamuc.edu](mailto:lmanning4@leomail.tamuc.edu)*

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## Using Paired Depth Interviews to Collect Qualitative Data

### Abstract

In this manuscript, the authors discuss using paired depth interviews as a method of collecting qualitative data. Paired depth interviewing—also known as paired interviewing—is defined as one researcher interviewing two people together (Houssart & Evens, 2011) for the purposes of collecting information about how the pair perceives the same event or phenomenon (Arksey, 1996). Although this form of interviewing has much potential as a data collection tool, it has received scant attention in the qualitative research literature. Thus, the purpose of this article is to provide a framework for using paired depth interviews as a method of collecting qualitative data. In this manuscript, we define and describe paired depth interviews, discuss conceptualizations of paired depth interviews using Roulston's (2010) framework, delineate the strengths and limitations of paired depth interviews, and provide examples of paired depth interviews utilized in helping professions. Furthermore, we present a case study of original work that illustrates the utility of paired depth interviews and provide suggestions for future directions for paired depth interviews.

### Keywords

Qualitative Research, Interviews, Paired Depth Interviews, Paired Interviews, Joint Interviews, Debriefing Interviews, Data Collection

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## Using Paired Depth Interviews to Collect Qualitative Data

Angie D. Wilson

University of North Texas, Denton, Texas, USA

Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie

Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas, USA

LaShondra P. Manning

Texas A&M University, Commerce, Texas, USA

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### Using Paired Depth Interviews to Collect Qualitative Data

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), since the 1900s, qualitative research has undergone the following nine moments that span from the 20th century to present day: (a) *traditional (1900-1950)*, wherein many researchers who rejected logical positivism embraced qualitative research; (b) *modernist or golden age (1950-1970)*, wherein attempts were made to make qualitative research (e.g., via grounded theory) as rigorous as quantitative research; many textbook authors attempted to formalize qualitative research; and new interpretive theories emerged (e.g., ethnomethodology, critical theory, critical race theory, feminism, phenomenology in various forms [e.g., interpretative hermeneutic phenomenology]); (c) *blurred genres (1970-1986)*, wherein qualitative researchers had a full repertoire of paradigms and methods; computers were used to assist the analysis of textual data; new approaches came to the fore (e.g., poststructuralism); several qualitative research journals were launched; and naturalistic, postpositivist, and constructionist paradigms gained power; (d) *crisis of representation (1986-1990)*, wherein qualitative research and writing became more reflexive and culminated in questions about issues of gender, race, class, and sexuality; new models of truth, representation, and method emerged; issues such as reliability, validity, and objectivity being problematized; the triple crises of representation (i.e., qualitative researchers were unable to capture lived experiences directly), legitimation (i.e.,

problematizing the traditional [foundational] criteria for evaluating and interpreting qualitative research), and praxis (i.e., involving asking whether it is possible to effect change in the world if society exclusively was represented by text); (e) *postmodern period of experimental ethnographic writing (1990-1995)*, which marked a struggle for qualitative researchers to make sense of the triple crises; the emergence of new ways of conducting ethnography (e.g., auto-ethnography); the elimination of the concept of the passive observer; and the promotion of action, participatory, and transformative-oriented research; (f) *post-experimental inquiry (1990-1995)*, involving writings addressing the need of a free and equitable democratic society; and new forms of qualitative writing being published that blurred the lines between social sciences and humanities; (g) *methodologically contested present (2000-2004)*, which represented a period of conflict and tension; the emergence of a growing body of literature on paradigms and methods; (h) *un-named (2005-present)*, which represented a period of confronting the methodological ramifications of the call for evidence-based research; and (i) *fractured failure (2005-present)*, wherein methodologists form two opposing camps (i.e., “gold standard” of scientific research [i.e., randomized control designs] vs. various forms of qualitative research).

During the period that have spanned these nine moments, qualitative research studies primarily have involved the collection, analysis, and interpretation of nonnumeric data that naturally occur from one or more of the following four broad sources: *talk* (i.e., data that are obtained directly from the voices one or more participants using data collection techniques such as individual interviews and focus groups), *observations* (i.e., collection of data by systematically watching or perceiving one or more events, occurrences, interactions, or nonverbal communication in order to address or to inform one or more research questions), *images* [i.e., still (e.g., photographs, drawings) or moving (e.g., videos) visual data that are observed or perceived], and *documents* (i.e., collection of text that is presented either in printed or digital form) (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008).

Of these four broad sources, the use of individual interviews—which became popularized during the first qualitative moment (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007)—consistently has represented the most common form of data collected in qualitative research studies. In support of our contention, Denham and Onwuegbuzie (2013), who examined all 401 articles published in *The Qualitative Report*, between 1990 (i.e., fifth qualitative moment) and 2012 (i.e., eighth and ninth qualitative moments), documented that 62.3% involved the collection of talk data from individual interviews. Thus, it should not be surprising that the last two decades (i.e., since the seventh qualitative moment) have witnessed numerous books on the topic of interviews, including books (e.g., Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015), handbooks (e.g., Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, & McKinney, 2012), book chapters (e.g., Fontana & Frey, 2005), and journal articles (e.g., Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Turner, 2010), and the like. These works have provided discussions of several types of interviews such as structured interviews (i.e., standardized interviews wherein all interviewees in a study are asked the same question by the interviewer), semi-structured interviews (i.e., non-standardized interviews wherein an interview guide is used but the order of the questions can be altered depending on the direction of the interview, and additional questions can be asked for the purpose of prompting and probing), unstructured interviews (i.e., non-standardized, non-directed, and flexible interviews in which a detailed interview guide is not used and interviews are encouraged to provide as in-depth responses as possible), and non-directive interviews (i.e., non-standardized interviews wherein questions are not usually pre-planned such that the interviewer leads the conversation and the interviewer follows what the interviewee says) (Kajornboon, 2005).

However, one type of interview that has received relatively little attention and that yet has much potential is what is called the paired depth interview. This lack of attention is

surprising bearing in mind that this form of interviewing was conceptualized more than 40 years ago—that is, during the qualitative third moment that begun in the 1970s (Pahl & Pahl, 1971); and has the unique advantage of allowing the interviewer to observe interactions between pairs of interest (Arksey, 1996). However, this void might have occurred because, compared to individual interviews, paired interviews can be difficult to organize (e.g., both members of the dyad of interest to the researcher must be available for interview at the same time) and to conduct (e.g., power dynamics inherent within the dyad might compromise the integrity of the ensuing paired interview, thereby threatening data saturation; cf. Sandelowski, 2008; Saumure & Given, 2008). With this in mind, the purpose of the remainder of this article is to provide a framework for using paired depth interviews as a method of collecting qualitative data. Specifically, in this manuscript, we define and describe paired depth interviews, discuss conceptualizations of paired depth interviews, delineate the strengths and limitations of paired depth interviews, and provide examples of paired depth interviews utilized in helping professions. Furthermore, we present a case study of original work that illustrates the utility of paired depth interviews and provide suggestions for future directions for paired depth interviews.

### Paired Depth Interviews Defined

Paired depth interviewing—also called paired interviewing or joint interviewing—is commonly defined as one researcher interviewing two people together (Houssart & Evens, 2011) for the purposes of collecting information about how the pair perceives the same event or phenomenon (Arksey, 1996). However, paired depth interviews do not represent two interviews being conducted simultaneously but separately, with the intent of pairing interviewee responses from each interview—as Yosha et al. (2011) did with their pairing of cancer patients and navigator perspectives of the navigation process. Rather, paired depth interviews involve the researcher interviewing two people at the same time and in the same place so that the two interviewees can interact during the interview.

Paired depth interviews unfold as the participants interact with each other (Houssart & Evens, 2011; Morris, 2001). For example, paired depth interviews flow as conversations between two interviewees are being observed by an interviewer. It must be emphasized that both interviewees should be interacting with each other; it is not merely a one-on-one interview with a third party observing or being present in the room (Seale, Charteris-Black, Dumelow, Locock, & Ziebland; 2008). Rather, optimally, both interviewees should participate in the discussion that occurs during the interview as equitably as possible. After an in-depth review of the literature (Arksey, 1996; Houssart & Evens, 2011; Morris, 2001; Seale et al., 2008; Yosha et al., 2011) and textbooks (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2013) related to qualitative research methodology, paired depth interviewing was found to be almost completely omitted from the qualitative research methods literature. Yet, in the 1960s, paired depth interviews, first known as joint interviews (Arksey, 1996; Morris, 2001), appeared as *paired interviews* in qualitative research. Thus, joint interviews and paired interviews are synonymous. For the purposes of this manuscript, the term *paired depth interviews* will be utilized to explain what has previously been identified as paired interviews or joint interviews.

On the continuum of interviews, paired depth interviews are categorized between one-on-one interviews and focus groups (Houssart & Evens, 2011; Morris, 2001)—and even more specifically, between one-on-one interviews and “mini-focus groups” that Krueger (1994, p. 17) conceptualized as containing three or four participants. Moreover, the paired depth interview has been utilized in studies representing both quantitative and qualitative research traditions, giving the appearance that researchers from both traditions conduct paired depth

interviews in the same manner. Although the concept of one researcher interacting with two participants is common for both research traditions, the goals of paired depth interviews and the types of data collected can differ markedly between quantitative and qualitative research studies. Indeed, in general, whereas quantitative-based paired depth interviews typically involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of numerical data (see, for e.g., Davis et al., 2003), qualitative-based paired depth interviews generally involve the collection, analysis, and interpretation of non-numerical data that take the form of talk, documents, observations, and/or images (e.g., Houssart & Evens, 2011). Researchers in the helping professions have utilized paired depth interviewing as a method of collecting qualitative data, specifically regarding child/adolescent issues (Highet, 2003; Houssart & Evens, 2011; Mauthner, 1997; Parrish, Yeatman, Iverson, & Russell, 2012; Zeidler, Walker, Ackett, & Simmons, 2001), counseling therapy, and supervision (Llewelyn, 1988; Ryan & Bardill, 1964; West & Clark, 2004), marriage and family therapy (Ehrenkranz, 1967a, 1967b; Geist & Gerber, 1960; Gullerud & Harlan, 1962; Weisberg, 1964), oncology (Harden, Northouse, & Mood, 2006; Morris, 2001; Yosha, et al., 2011), and physician-assisted suicide (Back et al., 2002).

### Conceptualizations

In a seminal article, Roulston (2010) developed a typology for conceptions (i.e., what we have renamed as *conceptualizations*) of qualitative interviews. Roulston's typology comprised the following six conceptions: neo-positivist, romantic, constructionist, postmodern, decolonizing, and transformative. According to Roulston (2010), a major theoretical assumption of the neo-positivist conception of interviewing is that by taking a neutral role in the interview process, using open and non-leading questions, and not expressing her/his own experiences and perceptions about the research topic, the interviewer can minimize or even avoid influencing the interviewee's responses (i.e., the interviewee's voice). Another central assumption is that neo-positivist interviewers are able to access the interviewee's authentic self.

In contrast, the romantic conception of the interview "generate[s] the kind of conversation that is intimate and self-revealing" that "lead[s] the interviewer to establish rapport and empathic connection with the interviewee in order to produce intimate conversation between the IR [interviewer] and IE [interviewee] in which the IR plays an active role" (Roulston, 2010, p. 217). A major theoretical assumption of the romantic conception is that through the development of rapport, the interviewer can obtain an accurate understanding of the interviewee's experiences and perspectives about the research topic. Moreover, like the neo-positivist conception of interviewing, romantic interviewers are able to access the interviewee's authentic self.

The constructionist conception of interviewing is based on the theoretical assumption that knowledge is co-constructed by both the interviewer and interviewee "to generate situated meanings and possible ways of talking about research topics" (Roulston, 2010, p. 218). Further, unlike neo-positivist and romantic conceptions of interviewing, in constructionist interviews, interviewers should not be able to access the interviewee's authentic self.

The postmodern conception of the interview is based on the premise that "representations of findings are always partial, arbitrary, and situated, rather than unitary, final, and holistic" (Roulston, 2010, p. 220). This conception involves the interviewer not attempting to obtain a comprehensive account of the underlying, but rather attempting "to open up spaces for new ways of thinking, being, and doing" (Roulston, 2010, p. 220). As is the case for the constructionist conception, in postmodern interviews, interviewers should not

be able to access the interviewee's authentic self. Instead, the interview data represent situated performances of selves that are co-constructed by interviewer and interviewee.

The goal of the decolonizing conception of interviewing is to "contribute to restorative justice for indigenous communities" (Roulston, 2010, p. 214). Another goal is to contribute to "the agendas of decolonization, transformation, mobilization and healing of indigenous peoples" (Roulston, 2010, p. 214). In these interviews, the interviewee and interviewer co-generate the type of conversation that is valued by a particular indigenous community. According to Roulston (2010), the interviewer takes into account her/his knowledge of the indigenous community's customs, practices, beliefs, and the like in designing the interview. The interview data are presented in respectful ways by the researcher for the good of the community studied and in ways that are accessible to the community members.

Finally, the goal of the transformative conception of interviewing is "to challenge and change the understandings" of the interviewees (Roulston, 2010, p. 220). Transformative interviewers aim to promote emancipatory and social justice. In particular, the interviewer's intent is to transform the interviewee's life by "opening up new subjective possibilities" (Roulston, 2010, p. 220). During these interviews, the interviewer and interviewee "develop 'transformed' or 'enlightened' understandings as an outcome of dialogical interaction" (Roulston, 2010, p. 220); and in which the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee is "less asymmetrical, with 'transformative dialog' enacted in the interview interaction" (Roulston, 2010, p. 221).

It might be argued that maintaining paired depth interviews are consistent with the type of interview that Roulston (2010) refers to as a *romantic conception of the interview*, which "generate[s] the "kind of conversation that is intimate and self-revealing" (p. 217); and which "lead[s] the interviewer to establish rapport and empathic connection with the interviewee[s] in order to produce intimate conversation between the IR [interviewer] and IE [interviewee] in which the IR plays an active role" (p. 217). Also, it could be argued that paired depth interviews are consistent with the type of interview that Roulston (2010) refers to as a *constructionist conception of the interview*, wherein knowledge is co-constructed by both the interviewer and interviewees "to generate situated meanings and possible ways of talking about research topics" (p. 218).

However, paired depth interviews appear to be most consistent with the type of interview that Roulston (2010) refers to as a *transformative conception of the interview*, in which the interviewer and interviewees "develop 'transformed' or 'enlightened' understandings as an outcome of dialogical interaction" (p. 220); and in which the relationship between the interviewer and interviewees are "less asymmetrical, with 'transformative dialog' enacted in the interview interaction" (p. 221). In fact, therapeutic interviewing represents one perspective of the transformative interview (Nelson, Onwuegbuzie, Wines, & Frels, 2013; Roulston, 2010). Further, paired depth interviews have the potential to meet Guba and Lincoln's (1989) five authenticity criteria, namely, namely: *fairness* (i.e., relating to the thoughts, perceptions, feelings, concerns, assertions, concerns, and experiences of each dyad member being represented in the text), *ontological authenticity* (i.e., the extent to which the constructions of the dyad members have evolved in a meaningful way as a result of participation in the paired depth interview), *educative authenticity* (i.e., the extent to which the dyad members' "understanding of and appreciation for [but not necessarily agreement of] the constructions of *others* outside their stakeholding group are enhanced" [Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 248, italics in original]), *catalytic authenticity* (i.e., the extent to which the new constructions and appreciations of the position of the other dyad member that have evolved during the course of the study lead to some action(s) taken or decision(s) made by the paired depth interviewees), and *tactical authenticity* (i.e., the extent

to which each dyad member is empowered to act on the increased understanding that emerged as a result of the paired depth interview). Guba and Lincoln's (1989) provide pathways for empowerment and, hence, transformation for the interviewees. Thus, the ability to meet one or more of these five authenticity criteria is what naturally privileges paired depth interviews from individual interviews.

### Strengths and Limitations

There are many advantages to using paired depth interviewing. To begin, paired depth interviews are usually easy to set up and have a relatively low attrition rate (Highet, 2003). These dynamics might exist because paired depth interviews work better when the two interviewees already have a pre-established relationship such as friends, couples, families, and co-workers (Morris, 2001). For instance, paired depth interviews can be beneficial when husbands and wives work together to address issues and conflicts in order to gain new awareness and skills (Ehrenkranz, 1967a). These relationships also can be efficacious because interviewees can provide gaps or *missing pieces to the puzzle* (Arksey, 1996; Houssart & Evens, 2011; Morris, 2001; Seale et al., 2008), thereby providing more complete data as each interviewee fills in the other interviewee's memory lapses and gaps in the storytelling (Seymour, Dix, & Eardley, 1995). Additionally, the nature and dynamics of the relationship can provide insight for the interviewer as he or she observes the non-verbal cues of the dyad (Arksey, 1996) or how the couple compromises to make decisions (Seale et al., 2008). This was seen by Morris (2001) when care givers would begin to contribute more to the conversation because the cancer patient was beginning to exhibit physical symptoms and needed to take a break.

Because of the nature and established rapport of the relationships in paired depth interviews, this provides for an environment to generate meaningful themes and conclusions (Highet, 2003; Morris, 2001). Analyzing the data also can be easier for the researcher with paired depth interviewing than with focus groups, because with more than two people talking, it can be difficult to determine what is being said and by whom (Highet, 2003). Additionally, in contrast to focus groups, paired depth interviews allow "for frequent and sustained dialogue between participants, a process possible in larger groups but likely to be much more dispersed and fragmented" (Highet, 2003, p. 114). Thus, a benefit of paired depth interviews is that the two interviewees usually will remain on topic or at least not stray too far, in comparison to when there are more than two interviewees who could take the conversation in many directions. An even more appealing aspect is that during analysis, transcripts will show how the flow of the interview developed and transitioned (Highet, 2003). More specifically, it is important for the interviewer to note who said what and when, who interrupted who, and who changed the direction of the conversation (Morris, 2001)—a hallmark of in-depth qualitative analyses such as conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 1968, 1972). For instance, Morris (2001) was able to see that cancer patients and their caregivers readily responded to most topics with the exception of the initial onset of the illness. Although it might seem that paired depth interviews function best when the interviewees are in agreement; that is false. Paired depth interviews allow the interviewer to identify differences between interviewees and how the conflict is handled and addressed. Conflicts that arise are usually simple misunderstandings, but can become violent in word and/or act (Highet, 2003). However, because of the nature of the relationships that guide paired depth interviews, heightened conflict usually does not occur often.

Another benefit of paired depth interviews is that they enable the voice to be heard of those who otherwise might not have been heard, for instance when a carer of a person with a disability serves as a *translator* or *prompter* during the interview. Further, observing non-

verbal communications in paired interviews also can help the interviewer observe interactions and (power) dynamics between couples (Arksey, 1996), making it easier for the interviewers to expose areas of disparity, tension, and conflict between couples than would occur if (a) an individual interview had been conducted with one couple member being left out of the interview, and her/his experience or views being inferred from the data provided by the partner; or (b) both couples had been interviewed individually and the data stemming from each interviewee combined. Also, using the typology of Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989), when paired depth interviews are conducted after individual interviews, the data extracted from the paired depth interviews could be used for the purpose of *triangulation* (i.e., comparing findings from the paired depth interviews with the individual interviews), *complementarity* (i.e., seek elaboration, illustration, enhancement, and clarification of the findings from the individual interviews with results from the paired depth interviews), *development* (i.e., use the results from the paired depth interviews to help inform findings gleaned from the individual interviews), *initiation* (i.e., discover paradoxes and contradictions that emerge when findings from the paired depth interviews and individual interviews are compared that might lead to a re-framing of the emergent theory), and *expansion* (i.e., expand breadth and range of individual interviews by adding paired depth interviews). Conversely, paired depth interviews could be conducted prior to individual interviews to help guide the interviewer's questions in the individual interviews.

Although there are many advantages, there are some disadvantages of paired depth interviewing. In particular, within a dyad, one person could dominate (Arksey, 1996; Houssart & Evens, 2011; Morris, 2001) the other by constantly talking, not giving the other person equal opportunity to express themselves. If this dynamic exists, it could also cause the other interviewee not to be able to concentrate on accurately participating or interacting (Houssart & Evens, 2011). In other instances, paired depth interviews could have the pitfalls of causing new problems (e.g., resentments, conflicts) between the dyad that did not exist before. Likewise, participants in paired depth interviews might not be genuine, because they feel that they should be unified and tell the same story, although they experienced and interpreted the situation differently. However, research is conflicting in this area and a conclusion cannot be made that a paired account or recount is not as accurate as is an individual account on the part of one partner to *save face* (Morris, 2001; Seale et al., 2008).

Finally, it must be considered that not all topics can be best addressed by paired depth interviews. For example, some topics that relate to trauma or could cause shame or extreme embarrassment should be avoided. It cannot be assumed that because someone is in close relationship with someone else (e.g., couples, family, friends), the corresponding partner knows private secrets. There are some couples, like those in Morris's (2001) study, who wanted to be interviewed as a dyad about oncology issues, but there are many more couples who prefer to be interviewed individually about a variety of issues. Additionally, husbands and wives might be reluctant to share the full extent of a situation because they are unsure of any discord that could present itself in the household after the paired depth interview has been completed.

### **Paired Depth Interviews in Helping Professions**

In counseling, Llewelyn (1988) paired therapists and clients to examine the helpful and unhelpful events that occurred in therapy that either led or did not lead to change for the client. In this study, the researcher uncovered the differences of what is deemed important to clients and therapists and gave recommendations, especially to the counselor, on how he or she can appreciate what is important to the client and incorporate it into the implementation of therapy (Llewelyn, 1988). Clinical supervision, which involves providing feedback to

those providing counseling, also has been used to examine the impact of the supervisee-supervisor relationship using paired depth interviews. For example, West and Clark (2004) videotaped supervision sessions to focus on the interpersonal process recall (IPR) to determine what verbal exchanges were helpful and unhelpful, while emulating the impact of those verbalizations on the supervisory relationship. The replaying of the tape had an immediate impact on the supervisory relationship and provided insight to both parties so that progress could be seen and disparities could be addressed (West & Clark, 2004). West and Clark's (2004) study is more prevalent today than the instructor-student pairing noted by Ryan and Bardill (1964). Ryan and Bardill (1964) paired the instructor and student with dyads such as couples presenting for counseling. The focus was on the instructor demonstrating therapeutic techniques and the student learning how, when, and why to apply the technique (Ryan & Bardill, 1964). Akin to the modern-day West and Clark (2004) study, the outcome of the supervisory relationship would be determined by the live interactions between the supervisor and student that would turn out to be better than second-hand information such as written notes or videotapes.

Specifically, paired depth interviews have been conducted with many populations that are served by the counseling profession such as children/adolescents and couples/family. For example, Highet (2003) used paired depth interviews to obtain the perspectives of teenagers who chose to smoke marijuana. Highet found that teenagers felt more comfortable disclosing in the presence of their friends. Likewise, Houssart and Evens (2011) provided evidence that children performed school-based tasks better when they were interviewed together, which helped to validate the applicability of paired depth interviews with children. Mauthner (1997) conducted similar task-based paired depth interviews with children and did not find any difference between pairs of mixed genders. In other research with children, Zeidler et al. (2001) observed how students interacted with each other after discussing differing ethical and moral opinions about the nature of science. Also, Mauthner (1997) found that teenagers were willing to discuss "unhappy family situations" (p. 19) in the presence of their parents. Thus, teenagers have been found to be capable of *agreeing to disagree* and to debate difficult issues with their parents and peers.

As stated earlier, joint interviewing has evolved into paired interviewing. Within the realm of 1960s research on joint interviewing in marriage and family counseling, the *joint interview* was used in therapy sessions with one counselor and a couple (Ehrenkranz, 1967a, 1967b; Geist & Gerber, 1960; Weisberg, 1964). Prior to the 1960s, couples were *interviewed* individually, but it became evident that there was a benefit of obtaining two shared experiences of the same event at the same time (Ehrenkranz, 1967a, 1967b; Geist & Gerber, 1960; Weisberg, 1964). This is important because marital therapy aligns with our definition of paired depth interviewing: two individuals interacting while being observed by an outside party. Because joint interviewing was successful with couples, the approach was applied to couples who were currently seeing individual therapists to formulate four-way joint interviewing, where each individual counselor and her/his client within the marriage relationship, came together in one counseling session to resolve marital issues (Gullerud & Harlan, 1962). However, it must be mentioned that a researcher likely will interact with participants once or twice, whereas a therapist will interact with clients on a continuous basis.

The medical and health fields, which are a part of the helping professions, also have used paired depth interviews as a data collection tool in qualitative research (Black et al., 2002; Harden et al., 2006; Young & Kleist, 2010). In terms of oncology, Harden et al. (2006) used paired depth interviews to document the experiences of prostate cancer patients and their spouses. Harden et al. (2006) learned that there were common struggles that bestowed couples and that there were also important differences that existed within couples by age groups. Likewise, paired depth interviews turned out to be beneficial in the Back et al. (2002)

study that examined the responses from physicians who were sought by patients and their families to assist them legally with suicide. By interviewing both of these groups, Back et al. (2002) found that there were missed opportunities fully to educate and to engage in a therapeutic relationship with patients that could have made the process easier. Young and Kleist (2010) utilized paired depth interviews in their grounded theory approach to studying couples who self-identified as being a part of a healthy relationship. During their interviews of the couples, they found that the relationship process was circular and that security in relationships occurred when perceptions and expectations were met.

Conversely, paired depth interviewing has been used quantitatively within the social sciences, medical, and health education fields with parent and child (Kegler et al., 2005), couples (Hirose et al., 2011; Mudd, Stein, & Mitchell, 1961); relatives and caregivers (Bijttebier, Vanoost, Delva, Ferdinande, & Frans, 2001; French, Leung, & Tin, 1999); and other types of dyads. Likewise, paired depth interviewing has been used in mixed methods research approaches that combine quantitative and qualitative research approaches such as gender and health issues (Seale et al., 2008); medicine, between colleagues such as nurses and physicians (Takman & Severinsson, 2004); health education with recovering drug/alcohol users and recovery mentors (van Melick, McCartney, & Best, 2013); and pedagogy, between class teachers and resource teachers (Bhroin, 2013) to generalize satisfaction or dissatisfaction with experiences or processes. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), Creswell (2013), Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), and Heppner, Wampold, and Kivlighan (2007), because quantitative research does not consist of verbal exchanges but numerical data, it seems that the approach of two people completing the same survey would be better denoted with use of terminology other than *paired depth interviewing*. Yet, the usage of the term *paired depth interviews* within the qualitative and quantitative research traditions show the inconsistency that exists in the current literature about paired depth interviewing.

### Case Study

The primary authors conducted seven paired depth interviews in order to collect data on the lived experiences of single mothers and their sons (Wilson, 2014). The researcher constructed criteria for the sampling procedures and requested that pairs interested in participating provide their contact information. After an in-depth review of the literature, a semi-structured interview protocol was developed and implemented into paired depth interviews between successful Black males who were raised in absent father homes and their resilient single mothers. The paired depth interviews took place at a counseling agency for some and at their homes for others. Participants were able to decide which environment they preferred.

The purpose for utilizing this method of data collection was trifold. First, the researcher was interested in observing the relationship between the two sets of participants (i.e., mother and son). Second, utilizing paired depth interviews allowed the opportunity for triangulation of experiences, stories, and accounts of past events. For example, if one participant recalled a situation differently than did the other participant, the opportunity for conversation regarding the discrepancies would be present. Last, utilizing paired depth interviews to discuss the topic of successful males raised in single-mother homes was a data collection method that has been overlooked by qualitative researchers. After an in-depth review of the literature, no studies were found regarding paired depth interviews as a data collection method between single mothers and their children. Although studies have been conducted that describe single mothers (Brodsky, 2000; Cherlin, 2006; Green, Furrer, & McAllister, 2007; Holland, 2009; Woody & Woody, 2007) in relation to their sons (Carson,

2004; Celico, 2009; DeBell, 2008; Johnson-Garner & Meyers, 2003; Warde, 2008), no studies to date were found that portrayed the relationship between mother and child. The primary researcher believed that utilizing paired depth interviews could fill the gap regarding this specialized population.

When analyzing the data yielded by the paired depth interviews, three sets of themes were identified by the primary researcher: (a) by the mothers; (b) by the sons; and (c) shared themes. It is important to note that the shared themes were themes that the pairs uncovered during the paired depth interview process. Both members of the pair provided insights into their lived experiences, which assisted in the development of shared themes. In order to arrive at the themes and to help capture the essence of their lived experiences, all data collected were considered by the primary researcher (i.e., via demographic questionnaires and paired depth interviews). Self-report measures of collecting data commonly are used in the counseling field, specifically, involving both quantitative and qualitative data collection. Although self-report measures are utilized to collect data, there is an inherent limitation because people only have “partial access to their own thoughts” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 136). It is important to note that with paired depth interviews, demographic questionnaires and paired depth interviews also involve the use of self-reports. However, there is an aspect of triangulation that occurs between the two participants because they have the opportunities to correct one another and to provide details that might have been omitted or forgotten in individual interviews. For example, when a researcher makes an attempt at triangulation utilizing several self-report measures, it might provide “a false sense of security” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 112). However, in this case study, each mother and son pair assisted in identifying characteristics, thereby capturing a fuller understanding of the phenomenon. Field notes and observations regarding non-verbal communication and behaviors during the interviews (cf. Denham & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014) were logged as a means of collecting data. In particular, non-verbal communication and participant expressions were recorded during the interview processes and utilized when reporting data.

Member checking involves obtaining participant feedback related to the researcher’s transcripts and interpretation of data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Therefore, in this same case study, each participant was asked to review the summary of findings and was given the opportunity to review the paired depth interview transcripts in an attempt to maximize both interpretive validity (i.e., the factual accuracy of the account as documented by the researcher; Maxwell, 1992) and descriptive validity (i.e., the extent to which a researcher’s interpretation of an account represents an understanding of the perspective of the dyad under study and the meanings attached to their words and actions; Maxwell, 1992), respectively. In qualitative research, this process is referred to as member checking, and a process identified as the most effective measure of confirming the participants’ experiences and establishing integrity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005). During the member-checking phase of the study, each participant was provided the opportunity to discuss how they felt participating in the paired depth interview process as well as asked to share any additional information that they might not have shared during the paired depth interview. This invitation was extended to each participant in order for them to have the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences free from the other participant—in this case their mother or their son. Of the seven pairs interviewed, there was no additional information, and each participant shared that they felt comfortable speaking in front of the other person.

In this case study, the member-checking process was an ongoing process that took place throughout the research study. For example, each participant was contacted when themes were identified and was continuously given the opportunity to provide additional

information regarding individual experiences in order that the researcher could capture the phenomenon and present an accurate account of each participant's experiences.

### Future Directions

Further research regarding paired depth interviews as a method of collecting qualitative data is needed. It is also important to emphasize the fact that many textbooks and current articles available do not contain any mention of paired depth interviews or any of the terms previously used to describe the concept of paired depth interviews (e.g., joint interviews or paired interviews). Therefore, new and emerging researchers likely are not aware that the opportunity for paired depth interview research exists. The more common forms of gathering qualitative data via the interview method involve individual one-on-one interviews and focus groups. We recommend that paired depth interviews be explored with different types of pairs (e.g., parents and children, intimate partners, and siblings). Indeed, paired depth interviews could be helpful in helping to describe a phenomena shared by persons in commonly formed teams or relationships.

An innovative opportunity for implementing paired depth interviews is in the context of what we refer to as *online paired depth interviews*, which can be conducted either synchronously or asynchronously. Like its face-to-face counterpart, an online paired depth interview can provide a context for incorporating the following four types of qualitative data: individual verbal data, dyad verbal data, dyad interaction data, and non-verbal communication data. It should be noted that data collection in an online paired depth interview context requires a different repertoire of data collection techniques. For instance, incorporating stimuli such as videos, documents, and team-building activities, as well as incorporating questions and probes into the structure of online paired depth interviews, has the potential to promote discussion between the dyad members, thereby optimally yielding richer data.

A huge void in the paired depth interview literature involves how qualitative researchers can analyze data stemming from paired depth interviews. Indeed, a thorough review of this paired depth interview literature did not yield any work in which such analytical guidelines were provided. Interestingly, after an exhaustive search of the literature, Onwuegbuzie and Denham (2014) identified 34 formal qualitative data analysis approaches in existence whose development spanned the years 323 BC (Hellenic Period) to present day. By *approaches*, Onwuegbuzie and Denham (2014) referred to qualitative data analyses that represent broad systems of analysis that either originated from or are linked to specific research designs, such as constant comparison analysis (Glaser, 1965) that is associated with grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, componential analysis, and theme analysis that stemmed from ethnographic research (Spradley, 1979). Of these 34 qualitative data analysis approaches, we have identified 15 analysis approaches that appear to have much potential for analyzing paired depth interview data. Each of these analyses is described in Table 1. We encourage researchers to consider using one or more of these analysis approaches. And whenever they do use an analysis approach, we encourage them to document it carefully so that other researchers can learn from them.

Table 1: *Qualitative Analyses that Have Much Utility for Paired Depth Interviews*

Name of Analytical Technique	Description
Word count	Counting the total number of words used or the number of times a particular word is used for the purpose of determining what each dyad member deems as the most important viewpoint or perspective, or as a way to compare and to contrast the contribution of each dyad member to paired depth interview as a means of assessing within-dyad equity (Carley, 1986, 1993; DeRocher, James, Miron, Patten, & Pratt, 1973; also, for a step-by-step guide, see Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007)
Discourse analysis	Selecting a unique or representative segment of language use, such as several lines of an interview transcript of a member of a dyad, and then examining this segment systematically for rhetorical organization, variability, accountability, and positioning (cf. Cowan & McLeod, 2004; Gee, 2011; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, 2008, 2011; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002; Potter, 2004; Potter & Wetherall, 1987)
Classical content analysis	Counting the number of codes that emerge from an analysis of verbal or nonverbal data stemming from paired depth interviews (cf. Berelson, 1952; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, 2008, 2011)
Keywords-in-context	Identifying keywords and using the surrounding words to understand the underlying meaning of the keywords, thereby contextualizing the keywords (cf. Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, 2008, 2011; Luhn, 1960)
Constant comparison analysis	In its purest form, analyzing data that are collected over a series of rounds (i.e., constantly compare data). Thus, it is very much suited to analyzing a series of paired depth interviews wherein information unfold in a fluid manner. Specifically, these rounds of data analyses lead to theoretical sampling, which involves the sampling of additional dyads for the purpose of identifying emergent themes; assessing the adequacy, importance, and meaningfulness of themes; refining ideas, and identifying conceptual boundaries (Glaser, 1965; also, for a step-by-step guide, see Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007)
Narrative analysis	Analyzing stories in order to give meaning to individuals' lives, enabling paired depth interview analysts to take account of research participants' self-assessments (DeVault, 1994; Riessman, 1993)
Conversation analysis	Using the behavior of speakers during paired depth interviews to describe people's strategies for producing orderly social interaction (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 1968, 1972)
Ethnographic decision models	Building a model of the decision process for a behavior of interest, resulting in a display of data, via decision trees, decision tables, or sets of rules that take the form of <i>if-then</i> statements (C. Gladwin, 1989; W. Gladwin, 1971; Ryan & Bernard, 2006; Werner & Schoepfle, 1987)
Critical discourse	Focusing on the ways that social and political power are represented in

analysis	language; illustrating how power differences (e.g., cultural differences) are formed, maintained, perpetuated, and resisted (Fairclough, 2009; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Foucault, 1972; Freire, 1970; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009; van Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2009)
Frame/Framing analysis	Analyzing how people within dyads understand situations and activities (D' Angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Dickerson, 2008; Durham, 1998; Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974; Kuypers, 2010)
Dialogical Narrative Analysis	Assessing the communicative act embedded within an accurate historical realization, based on the assumption that every individual dialogic interaction represents an interaction between two specific ideological horizons that pertain to the individuals (i.e., frame of historical consciousness) (Bakhtin, 1981; Frank, 2010, 2012; Gillespie & Cornish, 2010)
Qualitative comparative analysis	Systematically analyzing similarities and differences between dyad members for the purpose of building theory, allowing the analyst to make connections among the emergent categories, as well as to test and to develop the categories further (Ragin, 1987, 1989, 1994, 2008)
Qualitative secondary data analysis	Analyzing non-naturalistic data or artifacts that were derived from previous paired depth interview studies. This analysis is particularly useful when conducting a historical analysis (Heaton, 2000, 2004; Noblit & Hare, 1988; Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003)
Interpretative phenomenological analysis	Analyzing in detail how one or more persons within a dyad make sense of a significant event such as a conflict (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005; Smith, 1996, 2011; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; Todorova, 2011)
Micro-interlocutor analysis	Analyzing information stemming from one or more focus groups about which participant(s) responds to each question, the order that each participant responds, the characteristics of the response, the nonverbal communication used, and the like (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009, 2010, 2011)

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Because of the relative complexity of paired depth interviews compared to individual interviews, we believe that it is even more important for interviewers to undergo the process of meaning making via what is known as *interviewing the (interpretive) researcher* (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2008) or *interviewing the investigator* (Chenail, 2011)—but more simply known as *debriefing interviews* (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2008). In the context of paired depth interviews, these debriefing interviews would involve the paired depth interviewer being interviewed herself/himself by someone else to (a) develop greater awareness of and appreciation for the challenge of meaning making from data extracted from paired depth interviews; (b) identify personal feelings that arise before, during, and after the collection, analysis, and/or interpretation of paired depth interview data; (c) identify perceptions that might bias the interviewer in his or her interpretation of paired depth interview data; (d) appreciate the vulnerability of each dyad member and the ethical responsibility of the interviewer/researcher promoting and maintaining nonmaleficence, beneficence, justice, and fidelity; and (e) identify a priori assumptions about the research participants (cf. Chenail, 2011). Additionally, debriefing interviews would help the researcher to appreciate what it feels like to be a participant in the research study, which, in turn, can

yield potentially more ethical and culturally responsive use of paired depth interview data. Encouragingly, the use of debriefing interviews has been found to yield extremely effective outcomes (cf. Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2012). Onwuegbuzie et al. (2008) developed a debriefing protocol comprising interview questions designed to promote reflexivity. As conceptualized by these authors, the goal of a debriefing interview is:

to help interpretive researchers to identify and to reflect on the degree to which their biases potentially might have influenced the various facets of the research study (e.g., formulating the research question, implementing data collection, and conducting analytical procedures), might have changed over the course of the investigation in general and interview process in particular, and might have affected interpretations of findings (i.e., interview data) and implications stemming from the findings (e.g., formulating analytic generalizations). In addition, debriefing interviews provide an opportunity for the researcher to evaluate initial hunches. (p. 3)

More specifically, the process of paired depth interview-based debriefing involves the researcher being interviewed—either synchronously (i.e., real-time interview) or asynchronously (e.g., email)—on one or more occasions by a *disinterested peer* who is knowledgeable about the qualitative research process, who possesses good interviewing skills, who understands the research topic, and who has at least some experience conducting paired depth interviews. Optimally, these debriefing interviews would be recorded (i.e., audiotaped or videotaped) and face-to-face to facilitate the collection of nonverbal communication data exhibited by the researcher during her/his interview(s) (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014).

### **Toward a Research Philosophy for Paired Depth Interviews**

Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2013) introduced a research philosophy that they referred to as *critical dialectical pluralism*, which is based on the assumption that social injustices prevail at all levels of society. According to these methodologists, the broad goal of critical dialectical pluralists is to conduct research that advances and sustains an egalitarian society, to promote both universalistic theoretical knowledge and local practical knowledge, and to conduct research that is culturally progressive. In particular, critical dialectical pluralist researchers avoid conducting research that promotes any kind of cultural deficit model. Rather, they incorporate the social and cultural capital that is present among marginalized, under-represented, and oppressed individuals and groups, such as their resiliency, often leading to resiliency-based research.

Earlier, we stated that paired depth interviewing is most consistent with Roulston's (2010) notion of a *transformative conception of the interview*. Interestingly, critical dialectical pluralism is distinct from other transformation-based research philosophies that are centered on social justice (e.g., critical theory, critical race theory, critical ethnography, critical quantitative research, feminist theory, transformative-emancipatory) by also focusing on the (potential) social injustice that are perpetuated—often unwittingly—by researchers on their participants as a result of researchers exclusively making methodological decisions at every stage of the research process. To address this social injustice, when conducting research studies—whether representing qualitative research, quantitative research, or mixed research—critical dialectical pluralists make every effort to empower participants to make research-based decisions at as many stages of the research process as possible—namely at the research conceptualization, research planning, research implementation, research

dissemination, and research utilization stages of the research process. Critical dialectical pluralists promote this laissez-faire style of research by adopting a research-facilitator role that allows participants to serve as participant-researchers who meta-ethically co-construct knowledge and then disseminate and utilize the findings themselves, or with the research-facilitator(s), in a format of their choice. This transfer of research power from researcher to participants within the ensuing research-facilitator/researcher team, in turn, transforms the underlying research study from representing an etic (i.e., outsider's) perspective or even an emic (i.e., insider's) perspective to an emtic perspective (i.e., "representing the place where emic and etic viewpoints are maximally interactive"; Onwuegbuzie, 2012, p. 205). As described by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2013),

Importantly, participants have a co-equal say in what phenomenon should be studied; how research should be conducted to study this phenomenon; which methods should be used; which findings are valid, acceptable, and meaningful; how the findings are to be disseminated and utilized; and how the consequences of such decisions and actions are to be assessed. Indeed, the participant(s) is responsible for deciding what text remains in the final report, and, as noted previously, the participant(s) performs the findings alone or in partnership with the research-facilitator. In contrast, the research-facilitator assumes the role of democratic facilitator and consciousness raiser, or *cultural broker* between the participant-researcher(s) and entities that have power over them. (p. 15)

Critical dialectical pluralism involves the adoption of a pluralist ontological stance (hence the word *pluralism*); assumes a dialectical, dialogical, and hermeneutical approach to understanding phenomena (hence the word *dialectical*); and promotes and sustains social justice, not only within the social milieu, but also within the research setting (hence the word *critical*).

Although critical dialectical pluralism has been in formal existence since 2013, already it has started to become popularized. For instance, critical dialectical pluralism served as an impetus for the recent Mixed Methods Regional Conference that focused on *patient-centered mixed methods research*, entitled, *Patient Engagement in Biomedical and Health Services Research: A Pragmatic Mixed Methods Approach*, which took place in San Antonio, TX on August 3-4, 2015. According to the call for papers, "This 2015 Regional conference [was] a research design and methodology conference where methodological and technical issues of major importance in the field of health services research [were] addressed." Interestingly, according to the conference organizers:

The assumptive base of the mixed methods paradigm entitled *critical dialectical pluralism* (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2013) is that social injustices prevail in every society and that our major challenge in health services research today is how to adequately address the social justice issue of health disparities. We maintain that the critical dialectical pluralist researcher promotes research that "focuses directly on the lives, experiences, and perceptions of underserved persons or groups and promotes research examining the relationship between societal structures and ideological mental models that impede a person or group from identifying, problematizing, confronting and addressing unjust socio-cultural systems." This paradigm is compatible with the principles and values of community-engaged or patient-engaged research approaches (CEnR).

Thus, we believe that researchers who use paired depth interviewing should consider using critical dialectical pluralism as their research philosophy that undergirds and supports this form of data collection.

Building on the works of Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2013), recently, Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2015) mapped critical dialectical pluralism onto the focus group process by conceptualizing a new type of participant-directed focus group discussion (FGD) methodology, which they call a *critical dialectical pluralist FGD*, wherein participants are maximally empowered to make decisions at every stage of the focus group process. We extend their notion of critical dialectical pluralist FGDs further by proposing the *critical dialectical pluralist paired depth interview*. Such a paired depth interview process may be represented by stages such as the following: (a) Stage 1: the researcher selecting the research participants; (b) Stage 2: the researcher and participants co-scheduling the pre-paired depth interview sessions; (c) Stage 3: participant-researchers co-constructing research questions during the pre-paired depth interview sessions; (d) Stage 4: participant-researchers co-constructing the paired depth interview question(s) during the pre-paired depth interview sessions; (e) Stage 5: participant-researchers conducting the first paired depth interview session involving each dyad being paired-interviewed by a selected participant-researcher; (f) Stage 6: participant-researchers transcribing and distributing the transcripts from the first round of paired depth interview sessions; (g) Stage 7: the selected participant-researcher interviewers conducting the second paired depth interview session with the same dyad group to member-check the transcripts; (h) Stage 8: each three-member paired-interview team of participant-researchers (i.e., interviewer and two interviewees) conducting the third paired depth interview session to co-analyze the paired depth interview data generated from the previous two sessions; and (i) Stage 9: participant-researchers deciding how they will document and disseminate the paired depth interview findings and interpretations.

Critical dialectical pluralist paired depth interviews would be ineffective when there are power relationships between members of the interviewee dyads such as if the members represent a parent and child, a teacher and student, a doctor and patient, a manager and an employee, a counselor and counselee, or the like. However, when there are no power hierarchies—such as between twins, between classmates, between friends, between work colleagues, between patients, or the like—we believe that critical dialectical pluralist paired depth interviews provide an extremely effective way of promoting and maintaining a *laissez-faire* approach to knowledge construction, thereby enabling participants to find solutions to their own problems, and thereby moving toward social justice, as they—and not the researchers—define it. Indeed, one of the authors has started organizing critical dialectical pluralist paired depth interviews as part of his qualitative research methodology class, with extremely positive results (Onwuegbuzie, 2016). As an example, in this class, students—who are all from the same cohort—have been asked to form teams of three and to conduct critical dialectical pluralist paired depth interviews. Topics that they have co-constructed to drive their interviews have included using a feminist standpoint theory perspective to examine the lived experiences of women doctoral students.

## Conclusions

In this article, we have provided a framework for using paired depth interviews as a method of collecting qualitative data. First, we defined and described what paired depth interviews are. Next, we discussed conceptions of paired depth interviews. After specifying the conception that was most compatible with paired depth interviewing, we outlined the strengths and limitations of paired depth interviews. Fourth, we provided examples of paired

depth interviews utilized in helping professions. After providing these examples, we presented a case study of original work that illustrates the utility of paired depth interviews. Finally, we provided future directions for paired depth interviews.

Paired depth interviews have logical appeal because they have the potential to lead to the collection of data in a more cohesive way whenever the participants form natural pairs in the context of the research question(s). Indeed, it can be argued that in such situations, compared solely to conducting individual interviews of each member of the pair, the use of paired depth interviews would lead to an interview process that is more continuous, iterative, interactive, dynamic, holistic, and, above all, synergistic. Moreover, to some degree, paired depth interviews mirror what occurs in helping professions such as counseling and education, wherein, for instance, counselors counsel couples (e.g., marriage counselors) and teachers talk simultaneously with mothers and fathers about their children's educational progress during parents' meetings.

Our rationale for promoting paired depth interviews is based on our belief that these interviews have great potential for transforming the interview process in qualitative research studies, going significantly beyond the use of individual interviews. Indeed, our framework here is consistent with Holstein and Gubrium's (1995, 2004) concept of active interviews, whereby paired depth interviews represent active meaning-making processes.

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### Author Note

Angie D. Wilson is an assistant professor in the Counseling and Higher Education Department at the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas. Her primary research interests are addictions and offender counseling, counselor education, and underserved populations. She has published numerous peer-reviewed publications and has several years of clinical experience as a Licensed Professional Counselor-Supervisor (Texas) and a Licensed Sex Offender Treatment Provider (Texas). Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed directly to: [angie.wilson@unt.edu](mailto:angie.wilson@unt.edu).

Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie is a professor in the Educational Leadership Department at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. Co-editor of *Research in the Schools* and former editor of *Educational Researcher*, he is a licensed secondary school teacher, educational psychologist, and methodologist with expertise in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methodologies. Correspondence regarding this article can also be addressed directly to: [tonyonwuegbuzie@aol.com](mailto:tonyonwuegbuzie@aol.com).

LaShondra P. Manning is an Assistant Professor at East Texas Baptist University in the Department of Behavioral Sciences. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor-Supervisor with many years of experience working with children and adolescents in school, MHMR, residential treatment, college, and private practice settings. Correspondence regarding this article can also be addressed directly to: [lmanning4@leomail.tamuc.edu](mailto:lmanning4@leomail.tamuc.edu).

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