



RESEARCH SHORTS #1

Dyadic Interviews in Qualitative Research

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Dyadic, or joint, interviewing has appeared in studies since the 1970s (Arksey, 1996). However, it is not well reported as a qualitative research method. Much of the work that has been done with dyads involves intimate partners, families, and/or caregivers and comes from counselling psychology literature. Dyadic interviewing is most often used when the topic of research is a shared experience (Allan, 1980; Eisikovits & Koren, 2010). In this case, there are particular characteristics that should be considered when recruiting pairs: The individuals should have a pre-existing relationship (Morris, 2001; Thompson & Walker, 1982); the relationship should be mutual, with each member participating in the interaction (Thompson & Walker, 1982); and the relationship should be social and personal where each member has reliable knowledge of the other (Allan, 1980; Thompson & Walker, 1982). Very little has been written to date about dyadic interviewing with pairs of strangers (Morgan, Ataie, Carder, & Hoffman, 2013).

Dyadic interviews are qualitatively different from individual ones. They are more intimate than focus groups, but still retain a slight sense of a public event (Morris, 2001). The interaction and mediation that occurs between the participants can result in a mutual agreement of events and experiences, adding depth (Allan, 1980; Laslett & Rapoport, 1975; Morris, 2001; Seymour,

Dix, & Eardley, 1995; Song, 1998). It also results in the development of a 'joint' narrative, rather than two individual stories (Taylor & de Vocht, 2011). In analysis, the relationship between the participants becomes a unit of analysis (Morris, 2001; Seymour et al., 1995; Thompson & Walker, 1982). Analysis must also attend to whether participants speak of joint or individual experiences (Seale, Charteris-Black, Dumelow, Locock, & Ziebland, 2008) and care must be taken to avoid interpreting one participant's comments as a shared interest or concern (Morgan et al., 2013).

The interviewer must observe the multiple relationships in a dyadic interview (Laslett & Rapoport, 1975). The reactions of one participant to the response of the other can provide the interviewer opportunities to probe for deeper meaning (Allan, 1980). Participants will sometimes act differently in a dyadic interview (Boeije, 2004) and may answer

Dyadic interviews are most useful "when the researcher wants both social interaction and depth, when narrative is valued, and when interaction in larger groups might be problematic" (Morgan et al., 2013, p. 1283)

Dyadic Interviewing as Qualitative Research Method

Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The interaction between participants can add information and provide additional insight into the relationship• Non-verbal communication offers insight• Factual data can be crosschecked• More information is obtained with two accounts• A more complete, balanced picture is possible if each member of the pair corroborates the other's account• Exposes the differences in perception which can provide additional insight• Two accounts may open more avenues of research• Participants may feel more comfortable when in pairs (e.g., can provide support during difficult discussions)• Involving a key support person can enable an individual with intellectual or other disability to participate• Shows disparities and areas of tension as well as ways in which participants support each other
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The presence of the second person may hinder/change the response (withholding information, changing presentation style, etc.)• One person may dominate the interview• May only get the 'public story'• Distraction (lack of concentration) of participants• Interviewer can become distracted and not always follow up on particular points• Ethical dilemmas if tensions/disagreements occur between participants• The interviewer can become more sympathetic to one member of the pair

questions differently or withhold information (Sohier, 1995; Taylor & de Vocht, 2011). In analysis, the different ways in which participants respond can provide new categories for interpretation (Eisikovits & Koren, 2010).

The Young Lives Research Lab is currently using dyadic interviews in two research projects. In *Digital Media and Young Lives Over Time: International and Cultural Comparisons*, participants are asked to recruit their own dyadic partner, who may or may not be related. The only criteria are that they have an existing relationship and share some form of digital communication. Dyadic interviews will provide insight into online/offline social interaction. The *ACCESS-MH* project involves interviews with children living with mental health challenges and their parents. Individuals will be interviewed separately to ensure the child's and parent's unique perspectives are heard. Dyadic parent/child interviews will be done if the parent's presence is required to facilitate the child's participation.

Analysis of the dyadic interviewing process in these projects will provide further insights into this method and its value as a qualitative research tool.

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The *Young Lives Research Lab*, under the direction of Dr. Kate Tilleczek, engages in research on: the impacts of technology on young lives, youth pathways into and out of mental health, re-imagining education, and emerging theory and methodology. *We are dedicated to witness and speak about young lives in global and local contexts.*

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