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Interviewing the Interpretive Researcher: An Impressionist Tale

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In this manuscript, we describe the use of debriefing interviews for interviewing the interpretive researcher. Further, we demonstrate the value of using debriefing questions as part of a qualitative research study, specifically, one doctoral student's dissertation study. We describe the reflexivity process of the student in her study and the debriefing data that were coded via qualitative coding techniques. Thus, we provide an exemplar of the debriefing process and the findings that emerged as a result. We believe that our exemplar of interviewing the interpretive researcher provides evidence of an effective strategy for addressing the crises of representation and legitimation for researchers and instructors of qualitative methods courses alike. Keywords: Debriefing Interviews, Interviewing the Interview, Qualitative Interviews, Reflexivity, Representation, Legitimation, Bias

Qualitative researchers strive authentically to capture and to relay the genuine experiences of people through writing a text of social accounts, which, as noted by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), creates the "inescapable problem of representation" (p. 19). Further, considering the encounter that occurs between the researcher(s) and participant(s) in interpretive research, Moustakas (1994) focused on the wholeness of the qualitative research process rather than on its parts to provide deeper meanings of experiences rather than to provide explanations of experiences. Indeed, the story of the research relationships, both between participant and researcher and between the researcher and his or her data collection process is influential in coloring and contextualizing the written account of the research story. In fact, Ellis and Bochner (2000) identified the researcher as a subject and postulated that becoming a "vulnerable observer" involves creating a personal story of "what went on in the backstage of doing research" (p. 741).

Reflexivity, in some form, has been advanced as an important means for critically evaluating the whole qualitative research process (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009), reflexivity typically involves the "complex relationship between process of knowledge production and the various contexts of such processes, as well as the involvement of the knowledge producer" (p. 8). As noted by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2007):

> The reflexive researcher's perspective begins with an understanding of the importance of one's own values and attitudes in relation to the research

> process. This recognition begins prior to entering the field. Reflexivity means taking a critical look inward and reflecting on one's lived reality and experiences; this self-reflection or journey can be extremely helpful in the research process….Reflexivity is the process through which a researcher recognizes, examines, and understands how his or her social background and assumptions can intervene in the research process….Reflexivity goes to the heart of an in-depth interview; it is a process whereby the researcher is sensitive to the important 'situational' dynamics that exist between the researcher and the researched that can affect the creation of knowledge. (pp. 129-130)

Reflexivity can be enhanced using a number of strategies (e.g., keeping a fieldwork journal; Kleinman & Copp, 1993). A particularly useful technique is peer debriefing (Arber, 2006). Broadly speaking, peer debriefing involves the researcher providing information about the implementation and evolution of a research study to an impartial colleague (i.e., "disinterested peer"; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308), who critically reviews this information at one or more stages of the research process and provides feedback regarding the appropriateness of the data collection and data analysis procedures, the trustworthiness and completeness of the researcher's findings, and the overall progress of the investigation. By "disinterested," the colleague (i.e., debriefer) does not have a stake in the direction of the findings. Also, the peer debriefer might help the researcher to plan the next methodological steps. As noted by Lietz and Zayas (2010), "Peer debriefing can help to promote reflexivity allowing researchers to become more sensitized to the effects of their socio-political position" (p. 196). Moreover, peer debriefing is particularly useful for "exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308).

Recently, researchers have advocated a more structured form of peer debriefing, which involves the practice of the interpretive researcher serving as an interviewee in a series of formal debriefing interviews with the researcher(s)—a technique known as *interviewing the investigator* (Chenail, 1997, 2011) or *interviewing the (interpretive) researcher* (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2008)—for the deeper understanding of not only the research process, but also the research relationships that ensue through interviewing (Nelson, Onwuegbuzie, Wines, & Frels, 2012). In particular, Chenail (2011) outlined how the interviewing the investigator technique can serve as a useful initial step "to create interview protocols that help to generate the information proposed and to assess potential researcher biases especially if the investigator has a strong affinity for the participants being studied or is a member of the population itself" (p. 255). According to Chenail (2011), the interviewing the interviewer approach can also help the investigator to (a) identify personal feelings that come to the fore during the questioning, (b) develop greater appreciation for the challenge of revealing all one knows about a topic, (c) make explicit perspectives that might bias the investigator in the study, (d) learn the merits of being patient in the interviewing process; (e) develop an appreciation of feelings of being and not being heard; (f) appreciate the vulnerability of the research participant; and (g) identify a priori assumptions about the research participants. Moreover, Chenail (2011) contended that the interviewing the investigator technique uniquely helps the researcher to appreciate what it feels like to be a research participant in the study and, as a result,

increases the researcher's sensitivity to the research participant(s) in a study, which, in turn, can yield more ethical and responsible research.

Onwuegbuzie et al. (2008) established a debriefing protocol to be used by qualitative researchers to address the internal processes experienced by the researcher. This protocol includes a series of questions to be posed to the researcher to promote reflexivity (i.e., "the process of critical self-reflection on one's biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences, and so forth"; Schwandt, 2007, p. 260), catalytic validity (i.e., the extent to which a given research study empowers and liberates a research community; Lather, 1986), and paralogical legitimation (i.e., the component of legitimation that reveals paradoxes; Lather, 1993); and to address researcher bias (i.e., when the researcher has personal biases or *a priori* assumptions that he or she is unable to bracket [i.e., suspend]; Husserl, 1931) and authenticity criteria (i.e., criteria that stem directly from naturalistic/constructivist assumptions; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In addition, debriefing interviews provide the opportunity for the researcher(s) to evaluate initial hunches to illuminate the plausibility and trustworthiness of findings and interpretations. Specifically, Onwuegbuzie et al. (2008) conceptualized the following:

> The purpose of collecting these data 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 analytical generalizations). In addition, debriefing interviews provide an opportunity for the researcher to evaluate initial hunches. The process of the researcher explaining and/or verifying initial hunches to the debriefing interviewer might illuminate to the researcher the plausibility and trustworthiness of these hunches in the conduct of the research. Despite the multiple benefits of debriefing or interviewing the researcher, however, to date [the formal and routine use of] this technique has not been advocated by qualitative researchers. (p. 3)

According to Onwuegbuzie et al. (2008), the process of debriefing involves the qualitative researcher being interviewed on one or more occasions by a person who does not have a direct stake in the findings of the study, but who has good interviewing skills, understands the qualitative research process, is experienced at conducting qualitative research, and understands the underlying research topic. Even though dissertation chairs/supervisors are deeply invested in their students' growth as emergent researchers and have a stake in students completing their dissertations, as seasoned researchers and mentors, they are prime candidates to serve as debriefers if they have the following: (a) they have established a trusting relationship with their students; (b) they are familiar with the qualitative research process or can consult one or more other members of the committee who have this expertise; (c) they understand the underlying research topic and can consult one or more other members of the committee with expertise on the topic; and,

most importantly, (d) they do not have a stake in the direction of the findings. Debriefing interviews, which are conducted in a private place where they can be recorded (i.e., audiotaped or videotaped), ideally would take place via a face-to-face interview so that the debriefer can observe and document nonverbal cues, such as proxemic (i.e., physical distance between interviewer and interviewee), kinesic (i.e., body movements or postures), paralinguistic (i.e., all variations in volume, pitch, and quality of voice), chronemic (i.e., use of pacing of speech and length of silence in conversation), optics (i.e., use of eyes during the interview), and linguistics (i.e., language form [e.g. morphology, syntax, phonology, phonetics], of language meaning [i.e., semantics, pragmatics], and/or of language in context [e.g., evolutionary linguistics, historical linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, language acquisition, discourse analysis]) (Gorden, 1980; Nelson et al., 2012). However, depending on the interpretive researcher's preference or availability, the debriefing interview could involve a *virtual interview* that is conducted either synchronously (e.g., chatrooms, Skype, Second Life, and Short Message Service [SMS] via mobile telephones) or asynchronously (e.g., email, websites) using some form of Internet connection. Onwuegbuzie et al. (2008) recommend that the debriefer read the data transcripts from the study and conceptualize potential questions to ask the interpretive researcher that are open-ended and that yield information regarding the researcher's thoughts, perceptions, experiences, and feelings.

As a guide, Onwuegbuzie et al. (2008) developed an array of debriefing interview questions that the debriefer could ask the interpretive researcher. These questions were categorized into two types: (a) questions based on researcher bias and (b) questions based on Guba and Lincoln's (1989) principles of authenticity criteria. The questions pertaining to researcher bias are based on the following eight concepts: (a) the researcher's experience with interviewing, (b) the researcher's understanding of the participant(s), (c) the researcher's depth of knowledge of non-verbal communication, (d) how the researcher interprets the findings from the interviews, (e) thoughts regarding how the study affected the researcher, (f) concerns regarding the impact of the study on the participants, (g) ethical or political issues that might have come up at any stage of the research, and (h) the researcher's identification of problems that stemmed from the interviews. Table 1 presents a sample question for each of these eight concepts. The five principles of authenticity criteria are: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity. Table 2 presents a definition of each type of authenticity criteria, alongside a sample question. Indeed, it is the promotion of authenticity criteria that make Onwuegbuzie et al.'s (2008) debriefing interviews unique among the array of debriefing techniques. In particular, these debriefing interviews encourage the researcher to monitor the degree to which participants and stakeholders are empowered to act on the increased understanding that emerged from the study (tactical authenticity). These criteria, as a whole, help to promote social justice, thereby helping to ensure not only nonmaleficence but also beneficence.

Table 1. Possible Debriefing Topics (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2008) and Sample Questions Relating Directly to Bias

Topic	Sample Questions
Researcher's interview background/experience	How would you characterize your training/experience (e.g., clinical, applied) conducting interviews?
Researcher's perceptions of the participant(s)	Which participant responses did you feel were the most helpful? In what ways did you think they were the most helpful?
Perceptions of nonverbal communication	To what degree do you think the pacing of the conversation (e.g., length of time between question asked and answered) impacted the dynamics of the interview(s)?
Interpretations of interview findings	To what degree were the findings similar or dissimilar to your thoughts prior to conducting the interview(s)?
Impacts on the researcher	In what ways, if any, do you feel you are a different person now that you have conducted the interview(s)?
Impacts on the participant(s)	In what ways, if any, do you feel your gender/race/culture/class/hierarchy/status/age influenced the participant's responses/comments during the interview(s)?
Ethical or political issues	What types of ethical issues did you encounter during the interview(s), if any? What political issues did you encounter before, during, or after the interview(s)?
Unexpected issues or dilemmas	At what point did an issue or situation arise in the study that you were not expecting? How did you respond? What dilemmas did you encounter during the study? How did you handle the dilemma?

Note: This table was adapted from Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins (2008). Reprinted with kind permission of Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie.

Table 2. Definitions and Sample Questions Relating to Guba and Lincoln's (1989) Authenticity Bias

Authenticity Criteria	Definition	Sample Question
Fairness	Researcher's ability to value and to honor the evaluation process	To what extent do you think you have exercised balance in representing the thoughts, perceptions, feelings, concerns, assertions, and experiences of all participants?
Ontological authenticity	Criteria for assessing an increased level of awareness among participants in the research study	What strategies have you used to monitor your own developing constructions (i.e., progressive subjectivity) and document the process of change from the beginning of the interview process/study until the end?
Educative authenticity	Extent to which participants understand and appreciate diverse value systems of others	To what extent do you think your own empathy and insights of the participants evolved during the course of the interviews?
Catalytic authenticity	Appreciations and constructions that lead to actions or decisions by the participants	To what extent do you think that participants' newly evolved constructions and appreciations of the position of others have led to some action(s) taken or decision(s) made by the participants?
Tactical authenticity	Degree of empowerment of participants and stakeholders to act on increased understanding that emerged from the study	To what extent are all participants more skilled than they were previously (e.g., since the study began; since the last interview) in understanding and using power and negotiation techniques?

Spillett (2003) recommended that future works in the area of peer debriefing interviews should include examining the process of peer debriefing sessions and evaluating the outcomes of specific peer debriefing activities. However, although several authors have provided guidelines for conducting peer debriefing activities (e.g., Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Glesne & Peskin, 1992; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008a; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spillett, 2003), an extensive review of the literature revealed that only a few authors (Figg, Wenrick, Youker, Heilman, & Schneider, 2010; Hail, Hurst, & Camp, 2011; Spall, 1998) have documented the *process* of peer debriefing sessions and/or evaluated the *outcomes* of specific peer debriefing activities. Moreover, Spall's (1998) seminal article was the only article identified in which peer debriefing sessions were examined of doctoral students who completed their dissertations. Yet, as surmised by Bencich, Graber, Staben, and Sohn (2002), "At the beginning of the dissertation research process, doctoral students cannot see the end, nor can they imagine how they will get there" (p. 289). Thus, making the process of peer debriefing in dissertation research more public would be beneficial to doctoral students. Indeed, as declared by Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002) "in all the discussions of validity in qualitative research there is one major element that is not sufficiently addressed—the public disclosure of processes" (p. 29). Similarly, Constas (1992) concluded: "Since we are committed to opening the private lives of participants to the public, it is ironic that our methods of data collection and analysis often remain private and unavailable for public inspection" (p. 254). Thus, documenting the process of peer debriefing sessions and the outcomes of specific peer debriefing activities is consistent with the call of both Anfara et al. (2002) and Constas (1992) for making the qualitative research process more public by "publicly disclosing decisions made during the research process" (Anfara et al., 2002, p. 30), making transparent the methods and processes "by which raw data were collected and the processes by which they were compressed and rearranged so as to be credible" (Lincoln, 2001, p. 25), making the "data and explanatory schemes as public and replicable as possible" (Denzin, 1978, p. 7), and meeting the "qualitative ethic" of "substantiat[ing] their [qualitative researchers'] interpretations and findings with a public accounting of themselves and the processes of their research (Constas, 1992, p. 35). Also, we believe that such transparency would be beneficial to advisors/supervisors and mentors of doctoral students conducting qualitative dissertations, as well as qualitative research instructors.

With this gap in the literature in mind, the purpose of this manuscript is to describe and to provide an exemplar of how one researcher (the first author) utilized the framework of *interviewing the interpretive researcher* (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2008) to obtain a better understanding of her role in the process of research and, moreover, the concept of legitimation in her dissertation study of adult volunteers as mentors in a school-based mentoring setting. This exemplar of the debriefing process involves a qualitative researcher for which the debriefing interviews facilitated: (a) the personal journey of the researcher(s) over the course of the study, (b) the relationship of the researcher(s) with the participant(s), and (c) the relationship between the researcher(s) and the data. To address not only the critical elements of reflexivity and trustworthiness in qualitative research but also one researcher's personal journey toward self-awareness in the research process, this manuscript is organized as follows: (a) Background of the Researcher's Dissertation, (b) Debriefing Interviews and Legitimation, (c) Personal Use

of Debriefing Interviews, (d) Emergent Themes from the Debriefing Interviews using Constant Comparison Analysis, (e) Emergent Themes from the Debriefing Interviews using Discourse Analysis, and (f) Conclusions. To this end, the remainder of this manuscript is written in a narrative style by the first author/researcher and documents her personal experiences, thoughts, feelings, and interactions associated with her dissertation research and her efforts in addressing legitimation. More specifically, this narrative style represented an impressionist tale—similar to those described by Cooper, Brandon, and Lindberg (1998). Van Maanen (1988) developed the concept of impressionist tales as an effective way of writing about fieldwork. Drawing inspiration from impressionist artists (e.g., Monet, Renoir, and Van Gogh), Van Maanen (1988) conceptualized impressionist tales as representing a way to capture noteworthy fieldwork experiences. According to Van Maanen (2011), "impressionist tales present the doing of fieldwork rather than simply the doer or the done. They reconstruct in dramatic form those periods the author regards as especially notable and hence reportable" (p. 102). In the present work, the impressionist tale was utilized as an analytic technique for understanding how one doctoral student made sense of her experiences as a qualitative researcher and developed her research identity. It is our hope that by reading the impressionist tale of one researcher's journey to address legitimation through debriefing interviews, qualitative researchers will have another exemplar that illustrates how powerful this technique is for promoting reflexivity and, in turn, increasing awareness.

The Exemplar

Background of the Researcher's Dissertation

The purpose of my study was to explore selected adult mentors' perceptions (n = 11) and experiences of working with students (i.e., the dyadic mentoring relationship) in a school setting (i.e., school-based mentoring [SBM]). My research explored the efforts of these adults as a type of helping relationship as the facilitator of change to impact both the mentor and the mentee. Interestingly, recent studies of mentoring have been negatively impacted due to the problem of retaining mentors over a period of time (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman, & McMaken, 2007; Karcher, 2008). By illuminating ways that mentors perceive their experiences, roles, purposes, approaches, and the dyadic relationship, my study built on the foundation of best practices in SBM. Therefore, through individual interviews and observations of adult mentors with their mentees, I sought to recognize the relational factors in the mentoring dyads.

Debriefing Interviews and Legitimation

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) documented particular strategies to evaluate and to increase legitimation. Threats to internal and external credibility can occur at one or more of the following interactive, non-linear, and recursive three stages of the research process: the research design/data collection state, the data analysis stage, and the data interpretation stage (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Using this framework, seven threats to internal credibility and external credibility of findings emerged that were pertinent to my dissertation research study: (a) descriptive validity (i.e., the factual accuracy of the

participant interview responses as documented by the researcher: Maxwell, 1992); (b) researcher bias (i.e., as defined earlier); (c) reactivity (i.e., involves changes in a participant's response[s] that stem from being aware of the fact that he or she is participating in a research inquiry; Onwuegbuzie, 2003); (d) interpretive validity (i.e., the extent to which a researcher's interpretation of a participant's account represents an awareness of the perspective of the underlying group and the meanings attached to her or his words and actions; Maxwell, 1992); (e) catalytic validity (i.e., as defined earlier); (f) theoretical validity (i.e., the extent to which a theoretical explanation developed from research findings fits the data and, thus, is credible, trustworthy, and dependable; Maxwell, 1992); and (g) paralogical legitimation (i.e., as defined earlier). Thus, I created a matrix notating the threat to internal and external credibility of the findings in my dissertation process and the technique(s) that I used to address it. Table 3 illustrates the times that I used the debriefing interview to decrease the threats to internal and external credibility in my study. As seen in Table 3, the debriefing interviews were an essential component for addressing all seven threats to internal and external credibility of the findings in my dissertation research.

Table 3. Threats to Internal and External Legitimation, Methods of Evaluation, and Examples

Threat to Credibility	Internal and External	Method of Evaluation to Increase Legitimation	Example
Descriptive Validity	Internal	Member checking Audio recordings Triangulation **Debriefing interviews**	Observation data corroborated interview data
Researcher Bias	Internal/ External	Member checking **Debriefing interviews**	Debriefing revealed my reluctance as an active member Debriefing the transcriber helped verify my themes
Reactivity	Internal	Triangulation (observations and interviews) **Debriefing interviews**	Cognitive dissonance discovered in participants regarding interviews Understood my research stance and empowering the participants
Interpretive Validity	External	Audit trail Using extreme cases **Debriefing interviews**	Audio and video recordings, transcriptions, files of QDA Miner, reflection journal Used bracketing (epoché) with extreme case

Catalytic Validity	External	Weighing the evidence (i.e., trusted reporting) leaving an audit trail **Debriefing interviews**	Used my debriefing data to recognize and find my voice as researcher Uncovered convergent and divergent data
Theoretical Validity	Internal	Checking for researcher bias (i.e., debriefing interviews; journal data) **Debriefing interviews**	Used bracketing (epoché) Debriefing interviews for awareness
Paralogical Validity	Internal	Triangulation **Debriefing interviews**	Used Greene, Caracelli, and Graham's (1989) framework for mixing Discovered awareness for paradoxes in data

Personal Use of Debriefing Interviews

Debriefing interview procedures. Throughout my dissertation process, reflexivity and preconceived biases were addressed via the debriefing questions presented in the debriefing interviews, which occurred at four key points during the dissertation study: one before the completion of the observations and individual interviews of the qualitative study, one after the observations and individual interviews of the qualitative study, one during data analysis of the qualitative study, and one at the end of the study. The debriefer was my dissertation chair, whose interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and took place at various locations (e.g., debriefing interviewers home, at a research conference)—with the most notable location being the coffee shop near one of the schools involved in my study, and where I spent a considerable amount of time contacting my participants, writing entries in my reflexive journal, and the like. Each debriefing interview was both audiotaped and videotaped.

Analysis of debriefing data. When transcribing the debriefing interviews, I recognized that over the period of the 6 weeks of data collection, I grew in confidence in my role as researcher. In addition, the interviews were helpful in my awareness of researcher responsibility, but the interviews also were helpful for sharing my thoughts and feelings as the study progressed.

Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007, 2008b) suggested that using different qualitative data analysis techniques can increase triangulation and that researchers should systematically select multiple appropriate analysis techniques. Thus, I used two qualitative data analysis techniques for analyzing my debriefing data. Specifically, I utilized constant comparison analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), wherein I generated a set of themes for understanding multiple meanings through a creative process for determining relationships among emerging codes. In order to triangulate the data analysis, I also used discourse analysis (Gee, 2005). Discourse analysis focuses on pieces

of language used in the situation network, recognizing the verbal cues or clues that help listeners and readers to construe situations in particular ways and not others (Gee, 2005). As such, discourse analysis was appropriate for my study due to the premise that "humans construct their realities, though what is 'out there' beyond human control places serious constraints on this construction (so 'reality' is not 'only' constructed)" (Gee, 2005, p. 113).

The qualitative software QDA Miner 3.2 (Provalis Research, 2009) was used to organize and to analyze the debriefing data. Using this qualitative software, cell entries contained transcriptions of data in raw or reduced form that were extracted from the debriefing interviews. The cell entries were coded and subjected to critical reflections that involved the search for patterns and processes, taking into consideration threats to legitimation.

Findings Stemming from my Reponses to the Debriefing Interviews

Two major themes emerged through constant comparison analysis with respect to the debriefing interviews: (a) Theme 1: the importance of my research stance (i.e., transformative-emancipatory research) and (b) Theme 2: my personal experiences and identity as researcher and counselor. Each of these themes is discussed in the following sections.

Constant Comparison Analysis Theme 1: The Importance of my Research Stance

A stance that I considered to be appropriate for my study was the transformative-emancipatory stance (Mertens, 2003). According to Mertens (2003), the transformative-emancipatory stance is driven by the researcher who is seeking to conduct research that is emancipatory, participatory, and antidiscriminatory, and who focuses squarely on the lives and experiences of underserved and marginalized persons or groups such as women; ethnic/racial/cultural minorities; individuals with disabilities/exceptionalities; and members of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual communities. Table 4 illustrates the transformative-emancipatory stance as it pertains to beliefs and positions. Even though this research stance was adopted early in my dissertation process, approximately one year before data collection, through the debriefing interviews and revealed through constant comparison analysis, it is apparent that the research stance was foremost in my mind.

When writing the background of my study, I recognized that mentees clearly represent underserved and marginalized persons because, by definition, they are considered to be at risk for dropping out of school (Big Brothers Big Sisters, n.d.). As such, I began to research the idea of mentoring as "a relationship wherein the mentor and mentee benefit from one another" (Barton-Arwood, Jolivette, & Massey, 2000, p. 36). Further, I utilized a variation of Mertens's (2003) transformative-emancipatory stance, which I referred to as the *two-way interactive transformative-emancipatory stance*, because persons representing both sides of the relationship were at risk—with the mentors being at risk for dropping out of mentoring relationships (Rhodes, 2002; Spencer, 2007), resulting in detrimental outcomes for mentees (Karcher, 2005, 2007).

Table 4. A Transformative-Emancipatory Research Stance: Basic Beliefs and Positions (Mertens, 2007)

Item	Description
Ontology	"There are multiple realities that are socially constructed, but it is necessary to be explicit about the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, racial, gender, age, and disability values that define realities. Different realities can emerge because different levels of unearned privilege are associated with characteristics of participants and researchers" (p. 216).
Epistemology	"To know realities, it is necessary to have an interactive link between the researcher and the participants in a study. Knowledge is socially and historically located within a complex cultural context. Respect for culture and awareness of power relations is critical" (p. 216).
Methodology	"A researcher can choose quantitative or qualitative or mixed methods, but there should be an interactive link between the researcher and the participants in the definition of the problem, methods should be adjusted to accommodate cultural complexity" (p. 216).
Axiology	"Three basic principles underlie regulatory ethics in research: respect, beneficence, and justice. The transformative axiological assumption pushes these principles on several fronts. An explicit connection is made between the process and outcomes of research and furtherance of a social justice agenda" (p. 216).

Note. Adapted from "Transformative Paradigm: Mixed Methods and Social Justice," by D. Mertens, 2007, *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*, pp. 212-225. Copyright 2007 by Sage.

During my initial debriefing interview, I was cognizant of my research representing a two-way interactive transformative-emancipatory stance. Before data collection, regarding research ethics, I was asked by my debriefing interviewer if I might be prepared to terminate the study to protect the participants. I responded,

> Oh. Absolutely important and the same with the mentee; you know, transformative emancipatory is also to empower… so even like if the mentee comes up with something and were like to ask me something—I respond. I'm not interviewing mentees. I'm just observing and if it happens or a mentor you know. It's always 'do you know what to do if a stranger does come, you know certainly. Oh certainly and for a mentor certainly to know that there's a 911 hotline, you know— did you know that?' and I have that information. That's where I can empower.

Furthermore, I also noted how to anticipate dilemmas and tailored my research questions so that any response, negative or positive, would feel appropriate for the participants:

> It's in line with the belief systems of mentors because hopefully that, you know. my research questions are really general; so, my interview questions are also kind of… very broad. So you know with the belief system and the follow-up questions—'so what's your belief system as a mentor?' That's opening a big door you know. What or why is a mentor there? Do they feel the need to protect? Do they even know? So, those follow-up questions such as, 'do you know what to do?' [if your mentee were in danger] you know, that kind of thing, surely can be built in easily now that I'm aware of it, so much more easily you know… thinking about that.

Interestingly, I continued to revisit the idea of empowerment and shared a story with my dissertation chair in my third debriefing interview. I explained how, at one participant's member checking meeting, I was greeted enthusiastically. At this meeting, she shared a story with me about her week's event of traveling to her home state, her sense of empowerment, and the way she believed my study empowered her. She explained that my study was foremost in her thoughts. Thus, she visited some of the women who mentored her when she was younger. I disclosed the story she shared to my dissertation chair in the final debriefing interview:

> There were ladies in her life that had mentored her. Well, previously and in her interview, my probing question to her was: 'So then, I think what you're trying to tell me is that mentoring is in your blood.' And she agreed—she said, 'Yea, I guess it is.' And then she went and shared with the ladies that mentored her and she said that they were just in tears when she shared her story [being a participant in my study]. It was like a testimony to them that, 'You mentored me and now I'm mentoring someone, and I got to share this with someone, and it really empowered me. And, therefore, I want you to know the power that you put in my life.' She reiterated and touched my arm to tell me about my study: 'you did that.' She looked me in the eyes and said it twice, 'you did that.' I was just about in tears myself.

Considering how my study influenced my own sense of empowerment, I was surprised that the mentors seemed so self-sufficient and satisfied, because this was not my personal experience as a counselor and mentoring program coordinator. Hence, I was personally impacted by their positive experiences and relationships. I stated,

> Well, if you say *going native* means I want to mentor well I would love to mentor now. But I don't really consider that is going native. I loved mentoring and that is why I studied it. My kids are grown and it's just really would increase my awareness. I have been a coordinator for mentor programs for over 5 years and I had no idea what happened in the dyad. I

> had no idea. So, I'm thinking 'I really want to know what that's like.' I won't even know till I'm a mentor because I could study it all I want to but until I walk in those shoes. I won't know and I thought about you know; Do I want to mentor someone next year? That would be a whole new study wouldn't it? Again, as a play therapist, it's about nonverbal behavior and keeping myself not going native. Counselors can do that or if we get involved with problems that we can't shed them at the end of the day that to me is going native where you can't let go of them and you can't really see the answer; so, I think I've been trained not to do that as a counselor being a counselor researcher.

With respect to empowering the mentee, I learned that one mentee was scheduled to read publically her co-authored (with her mentor) and illustrated book *Maybelline's Birthday* to the Grade 1 classes during library time. This was a significant event for the mentor as she posted the public reading announcements throughout the school and was discussed excitedly by the mentee during mentoring times. In fact, the book was one of the primary activities during the dyadic mentoring time. Significant to me, they gave me a complimentary laser-colored copy and permission to use pictures from the book as part of my study. I realized that my presence in their making of the book also was significant to them. Considering my research stance and presence during mentoring times, I drove the extra 2 hours to attend Meg's public reading, only to discover that she was ill that day. Regardless, she was aware of her impact on my study and I believe that furthermore, she was aware of her empowerment.

Similarly, I sensed my research stance emerge when teachers began to approach me in the halls to tell me how mentoring impacted the students they taught. I noted in my reflexive journal that for a teacher, who is typically quite busy during the day, to go out of his or her way to speak to me and to express enthusiastically that mentoring is working for his or her student is notable. However, in my experiences during the study, it was not. Hence, teachers appeared to be inspired by the research at their schools and their enthusiasm does directly impact students who are mentored and those students yet to be mentored. Due to the debriefing interviews, I reflected on every aspect of my qualitative study.

Constant Comparison Analysis Theme 2: My Personal Experiences and Identity as Researcher and Counselor

Throughout the four debriefing interviews, I was aware of my own role and identity as a professional school counselor, and considered my training to be an asset in my research approach (two-way interactive transformative-emancipatory), especially when considering the observations. In the first interview, the "prebriefing" interview (i.e., the interview that takes place before a study begins; Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Sutton, 2006, p. 77), I stated,

> Well, it is unnatural, first of all. I am there. That's not natural. Umm, there are times in my own experience of mentoring that in a school setting, students were accustomed to come and go people. Like I walk in as

> counselor in the classroom and they keep on doing work. So, if they, if they somewhat know me, if I could just, you know, at least bridge that, it becomes more natural. So, instead of who's that lady? Maybe the first time it won't be natural, but if I'm observing three times. And the second time oh there's that lady again. And then the third time hopefully I, you know a fixture in the room [laughter].

When responding to the question: "if one of [the mentees] wants to involve you or tries to engage you as a researcher, what will you do?"

> Good question! [smiling] That's where my play therapy training comes in because that happens in play therapy sometimes. They want to engage you in playing and that's not what I'm there to do…so, my response would be umm you know you know, you know… my job is to sit here and really watch you what you're doing. So, go ahead and do... I'm not going to… I'm not going to take myself into what they're doing; I really honor their setting. You know… I really appreciate that you do— do it, you know you seem to be expert to this. So that, those boundaries are set.

In addition, due to my preparation through the interviews, I tapped into my counselor identity and declared,

> If I make eye contact with the mentee, I'll just keep the nodding like I'm with them and listening and not just umm, you know, I guess I don't want to appear as robotic or just there to observe and robotic. I want to at least appear that I'm there and it matters to me that I'm there—that I'm honored to be there. I know that I'm intruding in their private area. That, that...I really am appreciative.

Due to my personal changes during the six-week period and my role as a researcher and counselor, the following figure, Figure 1, depicts a role-by-time ordered matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994) This figure is based on Adler and Adler's (1987) perspectives of membership roles and the following: (a) peripheral member researcher (i.e., researchers are those who believe they can develop a desirable insider's perspective without participating in those activities); (b) active member researcher (i.e., those who become involved with central activities of a group and often assume responsibilities without necessarily fully committing themselves to members' values and goals); and (c) complete member researchers (i.e., those who study settings in which they are already members or with which they become fully affiliated). As seen in Figure 38 [of my dissertation], I began my research as peripheral member (Adler & Adler, 1987), whereby I sought to develop an insider's perspective without participation in group membership. However, by the end of my study and during member checking, I became very close to many of the mentors, and my role, on a few occasions, moved from peripheral member to, reluctantly but nevertheless, an active member researcher during the times the mentors and/or the mentees sought to engage me.

Figure 1. Role-by-time matrix and illustration of membership roles (Adler & Adler, 1987).

	Salient Characteristic	**Anticipated Changes**	**Realized Changes**	**Role Changes**
Researcher	Quiet presence	More comfort by participants	Asked by John Henry to attend recess with them	Engaged in the dyad when invited
		Participants might forget about my presence	Invited to Molly's mentee's (Meg) public reading of their co-authored book	Empowerment also might include my own extra effort to attend invited functions
		Learning the community	Former teachers of mentees learned of my study and approached me to inform me of the impact of mentor	Empower through allowing the telling of stories by teachers approaching me
Counselor	Ability to attend to non-verbal behaviors	Comfort with an observation checklist	Comfort with an observation checklist	Invested in the mentees, looking forward to seeing them
		Recognize and contain bias	Experienced closeness with particular mentors and mentees	Invested in mentors, looking forward to seeing them
Membership Role	Peripheral member	Peripheral member	Reluctant active member	Both peripheral and active member at different times
Task	Contacted mentors and school leaders to collect key consent forms and schedule observations for the dyad	Observations underway and my schedule was defined to observe 11-20 hours weekly	Observations are coming to a close (33 total) and interviews took place	Member checking and follow-up contacts are made
	Week 1-2	**Week 3**	**Week 4-5**	**Week 6**

In the design of the debriefing interview questions by Onwuegbuzie et al. (2008), it is clear that interpretation and awareness are important for a researcher to consider throughout key points of a study. As such, I realized the gift that the mentors not only give to themselves and to their mentees through mentoring, but also the gift I received in the way of willing participants. I explained this feeling in the following discourse of my second interview:

> I got a message from Angelina today to confirm that I observe on Thursday. I know I am very fortunate to have such willing participants. I keep going back to my research philosophical stance and wonder about the two-way interactive transformative-emancipatory design. I need to read more in this area so that I understand it better; the word *empower* is such a heavy term that the participants— many of them—seem to be empowered and not like I had read in the literature that the population of mentors as a whole are not sticking with mentoring. I have been really thinking about implications for counselors as I am collecting data because in the schools that I am observing the counselor is not active in the coordinating of mentors too little time? I worry that counselors are not effective at relationships in the schools and think that if mentors can figure it out, then counselors can learn from them.

Debriefing Interviews and Discourse Analysis

Building Task Significance

Gee (2005) ascertained that situated meanings and values are related to various places, times, bodies, people, objects, and institutions and, through discourse, specific language builds significance. For me, in the helping profession, the two-way interactive transformative-emancipatory research design was empowering. I was impacted by the consistency of the mentors and recognized that I, too, must honor their routines. Also, I found very significant my role as a counselor/researcher. For example, I stated in my second interview,

> I think of the word *consistency*… routines are solid. As a matter of fact, when I couldn't figure out the scheduling of observations, I tried to get a few mentors to re-arrange their day. Quickly I learned that I almost sabotaged my own study! The day and time needed to be consistent and this seems to be the magical glue for the relationships.

Therefore, the building task of significance revealed that consistency was a valued attribute in my own worldview, and that I was intuitive in recognizing the value of consistency and routine for the mentors. In fact, it was interesting to me that I did not pay better attention to the literature that underscored the importance of consistency and routines in SBM (Rhodes, 2005). In addition, it was important for me to adjust to their very systematic schedules for four reasons: (a) data would not have been as real if the schedules were to change; (b) the dominant themes of consistency would not have emerged; (c) my role as researcher would not have been authentic; and, most importantly, (d) I would not have empowered the mentors or mentees by asking for change. Thus, I recognized Guba and Lincoln's (1989) catalytic authenticity, whereby my actions pertained to new constructions and appreciations of the position of others and evolved during the course of the study. Also addressed was tactical authenticity, whereby participants and stakeholders are empowered to act on the increased understanding that emerged as a result of the study and have obtained testimonies from participants and

stakeholders regarding the pathway to action (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In addition, I realized these points during the period that I became aware of my reluctance to becoming an active member and teachers began to approach me and engage me in their stories about mentoring. With this in mind, I identified my evolving role as a researcher.

Building Task Activities

The activities that I undertook were varied, ranging from phone calls, to scheduling, to speaking with the librarian about using her office for interviews, to my presence as observer and interviewer. As a school counselor, I have been accustomed to wearing many hats, and felt comfortable with all of the activities. Also, the school staff and participants (mentors and mentees) became comfortable with my presence after our initial meeting. The activity of interviewing was meaningful to me. As such, during the data collection debriefing interview, I shared the following experience about the interviews:

> This might be off subject, but the [question] that I asked mentors: 'how would others describe you?' Because I'm really trying to look at the mentors' point of view, this question took so many mentors aside, you know they didn't have any idea! So, another question was when I asked them to make up a pseudonym. My experience was huge. I never knew how difficult it would be for someone to make up a name for oneself. I learned something from that about the importance of interview questions and things you can learn about participants… I was just going to assign names. I'm so glad I asked them. It added another piece of really good descriptive validity because some of them even told me why they picked the name and I think it kind of goes with what I see flowing through their interviews.

Through the building task of activities, I recognized that one activity of value to me was the task for mentors to create their own descriptors for themselves, their dyads, and their mentees.

Building Task Identities

Through language, people take on particular roles and, subsequently, the role might then influence their language (Gee, 2005). As noted through the themes emerging from constant comparison analysis, I was aware of my multiple identities: play therapist, school counselor, researcher, and guest in the school. Also, the mentors disclosed hidden identities to me, as recorded by my handheld recorder for my field notes. One example revealed through language was the identity of John Henry, one of the 11 participants in my study. I noted,

> One of the mentors picked the name 'Knucklehead' for his mentee. So, why I am not surprised that he picked the name 'Knucklehead' for his mentee? [laughter] It was just so appropriate and so perfect after observing

> him three, four hours actually because his mentoring sessions would go way over and he was like so real with his mentee just by the way he talked.

The above reflection of my time with John Henry increased my awareness of identities to a new level. In fact, I realized that without the observations, I would not have explored the many identities of mentors, especially those as humble as John Henry. Another reflection noted in my journal was the time I called John Henry on the telephone to invite him to participate in my study. At the conclusion of our conversation, he remarked that he was not an expert at mentoring and that he was not sure as to what I would learn from him. At the conclusion of my study, I disclosed to him the impact the observations had on my data collection and the personal pleasure I experienced knowing him and Junior, together as a dyad. He was gracious and pleased to have contributed and I listened to him discuss further his joy of mentoring with Junior, even when he was frustrated. Therefore, addressing tactical authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), it was apparent that we jointly assessed the degree of empowerment that took place in the study. It was the building task of identities that paralleled the theme of *identity as a school counselor*. Hence, I recognized how my identity helped to create my belief system— especially in the case of the use of implicit encouragers and the role of John Henry as classroom dad—much like the role of a school counselor as a classroom advocate and helper.

Building Task Relationship

Gee (2005) described the building task relationship as a negotiating component to signal what sort of relationship is operative and consequential. The building task of relationship was the dominant theme through the discourse analysis of my debriefing interviews and field notes. Over the course of 6 weeks, observing and interacting with the 11 selected mentors, I explained in each of the debriefing interviews that the relationships I made in the school—with the school principals, the school secretary, the school librarian, and especially the mentors—were important during data collection. I explained in the after data collection/before data analysis interview that,

> I realize that my relationships have really grown with the mentors. I call Angelina now and she has a way about her—so casual, so welcoming—like we have been best friends for a while. I began with each of them as *Ms. This* or *Mr. That* > and I am now moving to first names and cell numbers sorted in my phone.

Thus, as noted in the role-by-time matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and illustration of membership roles (see Figure 1), I progressed from a quiet presence to engagement with many of the mentors, mentees, and school staff. To my surprise, after my study concluded, I received forwarded inspirational emails from one mentor and Facebook invitations from two mentors. Therefore, my engagement and feeling drawn into relationships validated further my understanding of: (a) catalytic authenticity and (b) tactical authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). As such, the forwarding of inspirational emails and invitations to Facebook extended my understanding of empowerment and a

two-way interactive transformative-emancipatory stance. Moreover, the building task of relationship was the most closely related building task to the focus of my study to explore dyadic relationships, and revealed relationships connected through many facets (e.g., teachers, students, mentors). Hence, I recognized that the mentors were very effective at relationship building and to the point of building a relationship with me. As a result, I was deeply impacted by the way our relationship deepened over the course of the study.

Building Task Politics

Gee (2005) recognized that the value people place on the distribution of social goods is a component of perspective and is conveyed through language. The politics experience, as noted in my debriefing interviews, included: the power differential between mentors and mentees; the ways that mentors bridge differences in power, ethnicity, and gender for stronger relationships; and the general population of mentees, specifically as an at-risk population. I stated in my final debriefing interview,

> First, you know my study is not about mentees but what came out for me personally is that at risk for these mentees is not just the definition. Well, I didn't use the TEA [Texas Education Agency] definition—Texas definition— the public school definition < because it's not broad enough, umm the mentees who are being mentored in my study well I'm not studying them but they're often raised by a grandmother an aunt having no father in the home. So, at risk umm for mentees is a very emotional place. it could be like one of the fifth-grade girls being slightly overweight and not exactly fitting into the cool crowd group and she's at risk for a lot of things, you know: eating disorder, depression, a lot of things. TEA doesn't help us here.

Thus, the building task politics revealed the theme of the political positions involved in the study: researcher to mentor, mentor to mentee, and mentee as an at-risk student in the school.

Building Task Connections

According to Gee (2005), the building of connections through language involves the way some connections and not others are negotiated. Thus, I recognized through my debriefing interviews that it was important to build equal connections for all participants to have an equal voice. This realization was consistent with my two-way interactive transformative-emancipatory stance. When asked the question, "So, in what way do you think you've represented balance in the thoughts, perceptions, feelings, etc. of all participants?" I responded,

> I thought it in all fairness and integrity that I'd show each mentor the things [on the observation checklist] that I was writing down and I think that that was another good way to be balanced and check my observations too because it just verified that information and just also let them know

> exactly what I was writing down. I really, I really feel like I'm looking at all the observations lining up side by side and triangulating those data with the interview data to make sure that I'm not missing anything and I am aware of all thoughts, perceptions, and even the mentors' input.

However and as previously noted, particular connections were easier to make than were others. During the third debriefing interview, I described my connections with the mentees, mentors, and the study when asked the question, "Going back again to the mentees, I know you didn't connect with them directly, but I guess indirectly. I'm very interested in their demeanor when they first came in versus their demeanor and how they left," I responded by stating,

> So, I think and I don't know if that's a good or bad thing but I had learned that I had to negotiate some of that tension; so, I kind of made myself more personable. When we would go pick up the mentee together. It's hard for me to be just to be the girl with the clipboard [laughter]. I felt like it was too much tension. I almost didn't get to study one match because the mentee signed consent, but looked like he did not want me there at the beginning. He didn't say with words, but he was just like 'mmm...' and by the last time I was there he was much friendlier and it was fine. He was very nice. He said 'bye, are you coming next time?' It happened to be my last time, so I said, 'No I'm not, but thanks! I really wanted to know what it was like to be with you and your mentor; so, you really taught me a lot, thanks. Thanks for letting me see how you guys work together.' I needed to let them know about the study all the time. Because how could they be empowered if they didn't know?

Therefore, through the building task of connections, I recognized that I wanted to connect to participants in my role as researcher by reassuring participants and creating a comfortable experience. My identity as a school counselor also was revealed in the above example through my desire to validate and to honor the research experience with the mentee. In addition, I found a connection to the data and wanted to provide balanced representation and opportunity to each participant.

Building Task Sign Systems and Knowledge

Gee (2005) attributed the building task of sign systems and knowledge to ways of knowing as operative, valued, or disvalued. Through my debriefing interviews, I recognized that particular sign systems were in place that influenced my observations. For example, I was asked the question, "How participatory were the actions taken by the participants?" in my third interview and replied,

> I feel like they all fully participated because they just kept doing what they were doing. Some of them pulled me in a little more than others because that's their personality and I realize that it's just not possible for some people to not pull people in. I noticed that mentors that pulled me in were

> the ones that pulled everyone around them in. say… um, like John Henry—he'd walk in a classroom and everybody would say "Mr. John Henry!" and he would pull everyone in and you know he's just that, that kind of person that does that. One time he asked, 'Will you do these math problems with [my mentee]?' and I'd be like [laughter] put down my clipboard and help because that's just the kind of guy that he was so I think that you know each of my mentors were fully participatory—fully participatory. Didn't hold back anything.

Thus, the building task of sign systems and knowledge revealed that I found myself influenced by participation of the mentors. I realized that some mentors were so personable and effective at influencing others to enter their world. Thus, I integrated these very personal reactions into data for my study.

Significance of the Debriefing Interviews

When transcribing the debriefing interviews, it was apparent over the period of the 6 weeks of data collection that the first author/researcher grew in confidence in her role as researcher. The following sections provide her reflections regarding the specific usefulness of the formal debriefing interview process.

Authenticity criteria. In the course of becoming a qualitative researcher, Lapadat (2009) posited the use of a "triumvirate of methodology instruction" (p. 957) wherein learning involves three main strands: (a) learning *what* (i.e., familiarity with the language, concepts, theories, history, debates within the field); (b) learning *how* (i.e., focusing on a study, conducting interviews, transcribing tapes); and (c) recognizing *doing* (i.e., engaging and indentifying with the self's values, emotions, and understanding the human conditions associated with qualitative research). The formal debriefing interview process allowed Guba and Lincoln's (1989) authenticity bias to be spoken aloud in a type of active process to engage me in my values, emotions, and other human conditions important in research. As can be seen in the themes that emerged through debriefing (i.e., importance of research stance and identity as a researcher and counselor), the authenticity criteria (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) provided a lens not only for a reflexive understanding, but also for a proactive commitment to beneficence to empower the participants in my study.

The value of the formal debriefing interviews. As noted by Cunlife (2004), to become a critically reflexive practitioner involves an integration of content and reflexivity. By engaging in formal interviews, a new type of integration occurred for me because my reflexive thoughts were *verbalized.* In fact, the active consideration of authenticity bias (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) via the debriefing interviews (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2008) tapped into what I recognize as a counselor to be facilitative: the value of storytelling. In fact, Egan (1988) explained that a story "is not just some casual entertainment; it reflects a basic and powerful form in which we make sense of the world and experience" (p. 2). Further, in considering the facilitative conditions developed by Rogers (1956) regarding the counseling process, the initial stage in a verbal exchange

involves *active listening* and *attending* to a person's story. Likewise, the safe interview climate established in my debriefing sessions allowed for my self-examination, or what Rogers (1956) explained to be self-actualization (i.e., to fulfill one's potential). During the debriefing interviews, as I verbalized my interpretations of Guba and Lincoln's (1989) authenticity criteria, I recognized my *active role* in the co-creation of my participants' stories and the research process. Indeed, the formal debriefing interviews were more than attending to reflexivity—they also revealed new knowledge/awareness and increased my understanding of how to self-actualize as a responsible and ethical researcher. In short, I learned how to value the *process* of research as well as the product of research.

Conclusions

In this exemplar, the results emerging from the analysis of the debriefing data added a deeper meaning to the overall research findings stemming from the participants. In addition, these debriefing data added rich and thick descriptions of the first author's/researcher's reflective process and representation and legitimation strategies inherent in her dissertation study. The interviews were helpful in increasing her awareness of researcher responsibility and provided her the opportunity to share her thoughts and feelings as the study progressed.

In the design of the debriefing interview questions by Onwuegbuzie et al. (2008), interpretation and awareness are critical for a researcher to consider throughout key points of a study. As such, two particular components of Guba and Lincoln's (1989) authenticity criteria emerged as being most significant: (a) catalytic authenticity, whereby actions pertained to new constructions and appreciations of the position of others and evolved during the course of the study; and (b) tactical authenticity, whereby participants and stakeholders are empowered to act on the increased understanding that emerged as a result of the study. We believe that debriefing interviews are critical in qualitative research and, moreover, should be presented in the write-up of a qualitative study. With this in mind, we hope that our exemplar of the use of debriefing data presented in one student's dissertation study is helpful for qualitative researchers and instructors of qualitative research courses and beyond in addressing the legitimation components of qualitative research.

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