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Skype in Qualitative Interviews: Participant and Researcher Perspectives

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Abstract

As Internet usage has increased, web-based technologies such as Skype and Face Time have become more common alternatives for qualitative interviewing, especially for research participants who are geographically distant from the researchers. Challenges to the use of these tools have been identified, but as technology is currently changing at a rapid pace, more recent research is needed to provide up-to-date information on the feasibility of web and video conferencing technologies for qualitative interviewing. This paper reflects on the experience of using Skype for qualitative research interviews (n=14) in a study of pregnancy and parenting in doctoral programs, including feedback from research participants who chose to complete the qualitative interview via Skype instead of telephone or face-to-face interviews. Twelve participants who completed Skype interviews provided feedback on their experiences using Skype for qualitative interviews. Feedback from participants highlight an overall positive perception of Skype interviews due to the availability of visual cues from researchers and flexibility, but participants also shared challenges in terms of technology issues and participants' lack of expertise with the technology. Recommendations include the use of videoconferencing and digital technologies as an additional or alternative interview tool for qualitative interviews, especially for participants who have logistical challenges meeting researchers face-to-face.

Keywords

Skype, Online Interviews, Qualitative Interview Methods, Internet Technology, Phenomenology

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As Internet usage has increased, web-based technologies such as Skype and Face Time have become more common alternatives for qualitative interviewing, especially for research participants who are geographically distant from the researchers. Challenges to the use of these tools have been identified, but as technology is currently changing at a rapid pace, more recent research is needed to provide up-to-date information on the feasibility of web and video conferencing technologies for qualitative interviewing. This paper reflects on the experience of using Skype for qualitative research interviews (n=14) in a study of pregnancy and parenting in doctoral programs, including feedback from research participants who chose to complete the qualitative interview via Skype instead of telephone or face-to-face interviews. Twelve participants who completed Skype interviews provided feedback on their experiences using Skype for qualitative interviews. Feedback from participants highlight an overall positive perception of Skype interviews due to the availability of visual cues from researchers and flexibility, but participants also shared challenges in terms of technology issues and participants' lack of expertise with the technology. Recommendations include the use of videoconferencing and digital technologies as an additional or alternative interview tool for qualitative interviews, especially for participants who have logistical challenges meeting researchers face-to-face. Keywords: Skype, Online Interviews, Qualitative Interview Methods, Internet Technology, Phenomenology

Qualitative interviewing is a challenging, complex skill that takes practice and proficiency on the part of the researcher (Roulston, 2009). To be successful at qualitative interviewing, the researcher must be able to effectively build rapport with participants, elicit details, emotions, and facts that provide rich descriptions of events or experiences, and create feelings of trust so that participants share their stories honestly, without bias (Roulston, 2009). Over the past 15-20 years, as the internet has become an integral part of everyday life for many people, easy access to web technologies has opened up new opportunities for researchers in terms of using web tools in their research (Hamilton, 2014). In order to use Internet technologies for qualitative interviewing, research participants must have access to an electronic device with Internet access, and the technological savvy to access and use the program (Hamilton, 2014). For some, this access is through the increasing number of devices, such as smartphones and tablets, which are now available and can connect people to internet-based tools and programs (Moylan, Derr, & Lindhorst, 2015). With 84% of American adults using the internet, internet access is not limited to those with more resources; 74% of those in households with an annual income over $30,000 have access to the internet (Perrin & Duggan, 2015).

The potential benefits of reaching participants where they are most comfortable, geographically or in a digital world, have been documented (Hamilton, 2014; Mason & Ide, 2014; Shapka, Domene, Khan, & Yang, 2016). This creates flexibility for a qualitative researcher to expand their recruitment efforts; however, little is known about participants' experience with Internet technology (Hamilton, 2014; Opdenakker, 2006). This paper will describe feedback from mothers with young children who were participants in a study exploring women doctoral students' experiences with pregnancy and parenting, and who chose to complete a qualitative interview using web-based technology (Skype) versus face-to-face (FTF) or over the telephone.

Background

Qualitative researchers have been using Internet technologies, such as Skype and Face Time, for interviewing for many years (Moylan et al., 2015), most commonly when FTF meetings are not feasible due to geographic location or lack of mobility of participants (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). The use of Internet technology for qualitative interviews presents unique considerations and challenges to researchers depending on the research question, the characteristics of the participants, and the needs of the researchers (Iacono, Symonds, & Brown, 2016). The culture of Internet usage and online technology shifts quickly and the fit of these tools with certain populations can change over time. For example, Mason and Ide (2014) described an initial research plan to use email to engage adolescents in qualitative interviews, but soon found that their participants preferred to use instant messaging, as a faster mode of communication. Researchers must remain current in choosing effective and efficient tools for qualitative interviewing.

Benefits and Challenges of Using Internet Technology

Skype provides some clear benefits to both researchers and research participants, many of which are similar to those of telephone interviews (Holt, 2010). For example, the accessibility of Skype can minimize geographic barriers (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014), transportation issues and the challenges of busy schedules, while providing flexibility to conduct follow-up interviews if appropriate (Iacono et al., 2016; Padgett, 2017). Building a connection with the research participant is an essential skill for a qualitative researcher (Roulston, 2009) and many use behaviors such as shaking hands and sharing food or drink together (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014) to develop rapport. These opportunities to build rapport are missing during telephone or online interviews and can negatively impact the interviewer's ability to develop a sense of intimacy and trust, and potentially less rich interview (Seitz, 2016).

Accessibility and flexibility. Online interviews offer accessibility and flexibility for both researchers and participants (Cater, 2011; Iacono et al., 2016). Many online tools, such as Skype have free software and can be used across devices, such as computers, smartphones, and tablets (Perrin & Duggan, 2015). This can improve access to some research participants, while minimizing costs for the researcher. The flexibility in using Internet technology allows people to participate in interviews from any geographic location, without the participant leaving their home or hosting the researcher in their home, and minimizing travel costs for the researcher (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Iacono et al., 2016; O'Connor et al., 2008).

The use of online interviews offers flexibility for participants who are in multiple roles, as caregiving burden and work conflicts can make it challenging for parents to participate in research (Davis, Wladkowski, & Mirick, 2017). The use of Skype can address these potential barriers to participation as both the timing and location of interviews are more flexible than face-to-face interviews (Cater, 2011; Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Online interviewing is an

accessible, affordable way to facilitate research participation where subjects who are primary caregivers can remain in their home and participate in the interview concurrently with their caregiving responsibilities.

Although research is limited, some challenges and concerns with the use of web-based technology for qualitative interviewing have been identified. The use of digital tools can create a sampling bias by excluding potential participants without access to the required technology (Cook, 2012; Padgett, 2017; O'Connor et al., 2008). This argument is less valid than in the past, as the use of technology is now more common (Oates, 2015; Perrin & Duggan, 2015), but is still a concern if participants are from a group that has less access to technology and online resources. Though Skype is available as free software, it does require a reliable Internet connection, which is not always accessible.

Rapport. While conducting interviews using Skype and telephone have many of the same benefits for rapport building, digital technology addresses some of the limitations of telephone interviews (Hay-Gibson, 2009; Novick, 2008). During telephone interviews, researchers cannot access non-verbal visual cues, such as facial expressions, tears, or other indicators of participant affect. Because of this, rapport can be more difficult to achieve on the phone and these interviews tend to be both shorter and less detailed than FTF interviews (Carr & Worth, 2001; Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013; Novick, 2008; Rowley, 2012; Stephens, 2007). This lack of access to non-verbal cues impacts interviews in other ways. During telephone interviews, participants tend to check in with the interviewer more than during FTF interviews, clarifying or seeking reassurance around the adequacy or correctness of their responses in the absence of visual cues (Irvin et al., 2013). Online interviews may replicate some of the opportunities of FTF interviews, decreasing participant uncertainty.

For the researcher, having insight into the personal space of a participant may contribute to feeling connected, which assists with rapport building and in quality data collection (Kendall & Halliday, 2014). When a person is surrounded by their personal effects, they may feel more comfortable discussing sensitive topics (Anderson, Adey, & Bevan, 2010; Gagnon, Jacob, & McCabe, 2014). Participants who do not feel comfortable may limit or revise the material they share in the interview. It is not well understood how rapport building is replicated with online interviews and the implications of the inherent reciprocity when Skype is used (when a participant is privy to the researcher's personal space) have not been fully explored.

Challenges. Online interviews may include challenges and distractions that are not present for FTF interviews. For example, participants can find the ability to view themselves on screen during an interview distracting or disturbing (Oates, 2015). Technological issues may also arise, such as connection issues, lags in sound and/or video, garbled or indistinct audio, or malfunctioning technology. These technological difficulties can be barriers to the development of rapport and the flow of the interview as well as create opportunities for missed data (Deacon & Wakefield, 2014; Hanna & Mwale, 2017; Seitz, 2016; Williams, Sheffield, & Krubb, 2015).

The criticisms of the use of Internet technology for interviewing have focused on the researchers' potential loss of data compared to FTF interviews and less on the experience for interview participants. For example, nonverbal cues or situational responses such as gestures and expressions that may not be as easily recognized or understood in online interviews (Cater, 2011; O'Connor et al., 2008; Seitz, 2016), can easily be identified in FTF interviews and support researchers in developing and analyzing rich qualitative data (Hesse-Biber & Griffin, 2012).

Qualitative researchers already utilize digital technology such as the use of audio-recording devices to ensure data is accurately captured in an unobtrusive manner (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Padgett, 2017). Researchers are also well-aware of the need to feel comfortable operating their technology, including checking its function before the interview (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Salmons, 2016). When researchers or participants are not comfortable or

confident with technology, these challenges may be more frequent and more disruptive (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Hamilton & Bowers, 2006; Seitz, 2016).

As cultural expectations and knowledge around online technologies change rapidly, up to date research is needed to explore the implications of the use of these technologies to support and facilitate qualitative interviewing. Deakin and Wakefield (2014) share their experiences in utilizing qualitative research methods and recommend Skype as a supplement or even replacement for FTF interviews. While the benefits of the use of Skype for researchers have been explored, it is critical to include participants' perspectives and experiences in this research. This paper describes participants' familiarity and experience with participation in a qualitative interview via Skype. Perspectives of the experience using Skype from the authors are also included.

The two authors were the primary investigators in a study of women's experiences with pregnancy and parenting during their doctoral education (Mirick & Wladkowski, 2018; Wladkowski & Mirick, 2019a, 2019b). Both authors identify with this sample; women who experienced pregnancy and parenting during their doctoral education. As we designed our interview protocols, our previous experience with data collection and our shared social identities (mother and scholar) with our research participants informed our decision to offer as much flexibility as possible to our research participants, including offering a choice in interview type (Face-to-face, telephone, and Skype). We were aware of the flexibility Skype interviews afforded us as researchers (and parents) and that our participants might experience similar benefits.

Project Description

The two authors were the primary investigators in a study exploring the experiences of pregnant and newly parenting women doctoral students (n=28). This study employed a phenomenological framework (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994) guided by Merriam's (2002) articulation of research inquiry, employing an inductive process that uses data to understand concepts or theories, while acknowledging the role of the researcher as the "primary instrument for data collection and data analysis" (p. 4) and any biases or limitations that incur. Participants in this study were women who had been pregnant during their health-care related doctoral program (e.g., social work, nursing, clinical psychology, nutrition, occupational therapy). The sample consisted of 13 current students and 15 women who had earned their doctorate. The mean age of the participants was 36 years. Sixty-four percent had experienced pregnancy in graduate school within the past five years. Twenty-three different doctoral programs were represented. The women lived primarily in the Northeast United States (60.7%) and in the Midwest (17.9%), with four were from the South and two from the West Coast. We offered participants the choice to participate in the qualitative interview via Skype, telephone, or face-to-face. Because the literature on the use of Skype and other modes of internet technology is limited, we decided to ask research participants for their feedback on this use of technology for qualitative interviewing at the end of the interview. Of the participants, 14 (50%) chose to interview via Skype.

Data Collection

Fourteen women (50%) in the study of women's experience with pregnancy and parenting during doctoral education chose to complete interviews using Skype. Two of these switched midway through the interview to the telephone due to technical difficulties. For the Skype interviews which were completed successfully (n=12), the interviewers asked research participants to reflect on their experiences with this type of interviewing. We audio recorded

the interviews on-site and then transcribed them verbatim. These transcribed responses comprise the data presented in the findings section. The Institutional Review Boards (IRB) at both our universities approved the inclusion of these questions to the interview guide.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this project focused on questions about the experience of interviewing via Skype. These questions were about previous use of Skype or other web-based technology for personal use, in a qualitative interview as a participant, and if applicable, a researcher; their experience engaging in this specific interview over Skype; and recommendations for future use of Skype as a qualitative interviewing tool.

An open coding process was used to build concepts and categories from the raw data (Creswell & Poth, 2018) to determine the primary themes in the participants' responses about their experiences interviewing via Skype. Both researchers completed a line-by-line review of the Skype interview questions to identify initial codes and then codes were groups together as overarching themes were recognized (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researchers independently defined each code and created a codebook with reconciled and finalized codes. Finally, the codes were reviewed for depth and frequency across transcripts by preliminarily counting the occurrence of codes (Huberman & Miles, 1994).

Finally, to minimize impact of our shared experience of pregnancy during doctoral education and social proximity with participants, field notes were kept during and after interviews to note participant behavior, including expressions and mannerisms or other data pertinent to the context or setting of the interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). These field notes include information gleaned during the Skype interviews when researchers were privy to the intimate environments of mothering, and vice versa. For example, some participants were caring for infants or toddlers during the interview while on occasion, a researcher was also at home providing care to a child. To acknowledge this intimacy and minimize potential bias during data collection and analysis, the researchers also engaged in an extensive process of writing individual memos and ongoing dialogue at all stages of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The researchers incorporated their experiences within these reflections to understand the common or shared experiences of the phenomenon for a group of individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Findings

This paper explores the use of Skype for qualitative interviewing (n=14) in a study on women's experiences with pregnancy and parenting in doctoral programs (n=28). Feedback from participants who completed Skype interviews is presented below. All of these participants were married, and all were mothers. Most (n=10) were current doctoral students. Half (n=6) reported they were familiar with Skype prior to this study and used it for such purposes as connecting with out-of-state family, attending meetings remotely, or as a tool within their own research. Most (n=9) had never participated in a research interview via Skype. Two main themes emerged from their reflections on this experience: the benefits of visual cues in being able to see the interviewer and the flexibility and challenges of using Skype.

Benefits of Visual Cues

Participants (n=9) commented on the benefits of visual cues during the interview. One of the benefits included the ability of the participant to see the researcher, as opposed to a phone call where the research participant only hears the researcher's voice. Participants agreed that

their ability to see the researcher helped them feel more connected to the researcher. They appreciated the ability to read the researcher's non-verbal cues, as evidenced by this participant's comment:

> The Skype piece gives you … personal connection that you lack when you don't get to do it in person. You have to see somebody and feel a little bit more familiar with how they're asking questions... It's a neat idea.

In her comment, this participant highlighted the connection she felt to the researcher because she could see her face.

The ability to see the researcher's face, expressions, and other non-verbal communication also helped participants feel that the researcher understood what they were saying, which also helped them feel more connected. One participant described this, saying, "It's helpful to see the person you're talking to, and get that affirmation or feedback about what you're saying, so... this [Skype interview] is good, yeah." Participants felt the non-verbal feedback they received from the researcher supported their connection, as they could see the researcher's expressions. The non-verbal feedback available via Skype provided validation to participants, supporting the development of rapport between researcher and research participant, and offering security for the participants within the research interview.

A second benefit of Skype interviews was their ability to provide visual access to the office space and visible social identity of both the participant and researcher, aiding in the rapport and trust building process. The ability of the participant to see the researcher and her environment reveals information about the researcher to the participant. One participant, a current doctoral student, commented on the researcher's home office, saying, "I like that I can see the pictures of your kiddos in the background… Meaning, that this [parenting while a doctoral student] is familiar. It's very relatable to see the pictures of your kiddos in the background." This participant was able to glean similarities between herself and the researcher from the background of the Skype interview, which visually—but unintentionally—demonstrated the researcher's personal knowledge on the research subject, and supported rapport building.

Flexibility and Challenges

Seven participants highlighted the flexibility and challenges in using Skype. Specifically, they discussed the flexibility of Skype to access participants. Interviews could be scheduled while participants were simultaneously managing caregiving responsibilities, such as when children napped or after they had gone to bed. For this project, where the sample was pregnant and parenting women doctoral students, this was a particularly relevant concern. One participant participated in an interview while on maternity leave, and described this benefit, saying, "I am holding my baby so that's way easier than if I had driven and met you somewhere." This research participant valued the ability to remain at her home with her newborn, who spent the interview sleeping on her chest. She perceived a face-to-face meeting as more disruptive than the Skype interview.

Participants perceived the scheduling flexibility of Skype as a benefit. With Skype, there is no travel time and therefore, the only time commitment is the interview itself. One participant noted this benefit, saying:

> Sometimes if it doesn't work out for schedules someone will offer Skype or Face Time and … it works out great because it cuts your travel time... and as long as you have a good connection you should be good.

For participants in this sample, who were juggling academic work and families, as well as sometimes paid work, this was appreciated.

Participants identified the ability of Skype interviews to expand the scope of recruitment beyond geographic barriers. One participant said, "If you can't use Skype, then you would only be limited to … [locations] near where you live. [Skype] opens up the ability to do … a nationwide thing." This participant recognized the flexibility of Skype in terms of allowing for interviews in which participants could see each other, but without geographic limitations.

Participants recognized several facets of flexibility of Skype interviewing compared to face-to-face interviews; the ability to simultaneously take care of children in their home while interviewing, the lack of time commitment and travel required, and the ability to do interviews across large geographic distances. Despite these perceived benefits of using Skype interviews, participants acknowledged the challenges managing technology issues when interviewing via Skype. Interviewing via Skype requires a baseline knowledge of the program, including installing it and opening it on the computer, which is not required of phone or face-to-face interviews. For participants without experience or expertise in this medium, interviewing via Skype can be challenging, as this participant described:

> I told you that I have issues with Skype … I don't know what has happened the past three times I've tried to Skype. The last time it was the audio. Before that it was my picture … it's always on my end. So, it's probably user error.

This participant did not see herself as an expert in the specific technology being used and had repeated experiences with the technology being unsuccessful.

Some of the technology issues were significant enough that they disrupted the flow of the interview. For example, one participant described the challenges, saying, "It's [the connection] a little bit laggy and so it'll freeze, so it's a little bit weird in that regard." The technology issues described by this participant could clearly interfere with the interview and need to be addressed before the interview can continue. In two of the interviews, the technology challenges, such as time lapses and lagging video, so significantly disrupted the interview that the researcher switched to using the telephone.

Discussion

Overall, participants in this study reported benefits of using Skype for a qualitative interview. This included feelings of connection, solidarity, and validation, which came from the visual cues available in seeing the researcher and the environment, reflecting the findings of previous research on the topic (Carr & Worth, 2001; Hamilton, 2014; Irvine et al., 2013). Results seem to allay previously identified concerns about the ability of researchers to build rapport and connection with research participants in online interviews (Hay-Gibson, 2009; Rowley, 2012). Although researchers have raised concerns that interpreting non-verbal communication in online interviews is more difficult compared to in face-to-face interviews, participants in this study did not share these concerns (Cater, 2011; Seitz, 2016). In fact, participants identified multiple benefits to being able to see the researcher, including a sense of connection, comfort, validation, and shared social identity with the researcher. This was important and facilitated the connection between researcher and participant during the interview (Seitz, 2016) as it provided evidence to participants that the researchers belonged to the same group (e.g., female academics with young children). These kinds of personal

connections benefit the data collection in ways that are not always possible when researchers are "outsiders" (Roulston, 2009).

The use of Skype and the interview environment is important to consider. For this study, it appears as a benefit because of the similar social identities of researchers and research participants and seemed to facilitate rapport building in a way that is unique to this interview tool. If the researchers were not members of this group, then the environment may have instead hindered connection and rapport. The interview environment had other benefits. Primarily, participants could choose the location and time which best fit their needs (Hanna, 2012; Oates, 2015). As individuals with caregiving responsibilities, they could choose the environment that best accommodated the competing demands on their time. It is important to note that none of the FTF participants in this study did choose their home as an interview location, instead, opting to meet at work offices or public places, like restaurants or libraries. Perhaps those being interviewed via Skype are more willing to invite the researcher into their home virtually, than they would be to invite them in physically. The Skype interviews facilitated virtual at home interviews, which research suggests increases participants' comfort discussing sensitive topics, such as pregnancy and parenting (Anderson et al., 2010; Gagnon et al., 2014).

The benefit of the flexibility of Skype interviewing was clearly identified by research participants. As is emphasized on previous research on Skype interviewing (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014), in this study, flexibility provided the opportunity for participants from a range of geographic locations to be involved. Six of the participants were in different regions of the country than the two researchers, who were located in the Northeast and Midwest. Even within the Northeast and Midwest, some research participants were geographically too distant for FTF interviews to be feasible. Some research participants who did live close enough for face-to-face interviewing still chose to use Skype, emphasizing the significant benefit of Skype in terms of creating more flexibility for timing and location of interviews (Cater, 2011; Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). The participants in this study also emphasized the benefit of Skype interviews in reducing the time and travel burden for research participants for whom work and caregiving responsibilities are barriers to research participation, which is a benefit of Skype interviewing that is less discussed in the literature, although parenting small children can be a barrier to research participation (Davis et al., 2017) and recruitment of parents with young children can be a significant challenge (Mirick, 2016). The availability of online interviews may make research participation less of a burden for potential participants, as childcare and travel time are not required, yet the interviews still allow for the observation of nonverbal cues and the development of a rapport between interviewer and participant.

Finally, the experience with the technological challenges of Skype interviewing reflects the challenges that have been identified earlier in the literature (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; King & Horrocks, 2010; Hamilton, 2014; Hanna, 2012; Seitz, 2016; Williams et al., 2015). Even in this population of highly educated adult women with prior Skype experience, there were some participants who did not feel confident about their use of the technology. In many interviews, technology issues occurred and for some, this impacted the flow of the interview. Previous literature on Skype interviewing suggests that technology issues may be more common and more disruptive when the researchers and/or research participants are uncomfortable or unfamiliar with the technology being used (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Hamilton & Bowers, 2006; Seitz, 2016). These challenges were an added stress on the researchers to ensure continuity in the interview and to continue to develop a rapport with the participant (King & Horrocks, 2010). This highlights the need for qualitative researchers using Skype as an interview tool to be well trained to address any technology glitches and to have a contingency plan in place, such as switching to telephone, the contingency plan used in this study.

To include Skype as an option for qualitative interviews, careful attention in design and sampling strategies are necessary (Hanna & Mwale, 2017). For example, it is important to consider whether the use of online tools to collect data is a good fit for the population being studied (Walker, 2013) as well as its match to the researcher's area of expertise and competence. In this study, although both interviewers perceived themselves as competent and experienced in using Skype technology, audio and connection issues still emerged during the interviews, some which could not be successfully addressed. Researchers should consult with an expert in this technology to better understand strategies for addressing these issues prior to beginning interviews.

Hanna (2012) recommends an environment assessment prior to an interview to consider the potential impact of any contextual information on the data collection. For this study, the researchers concluded that the environment of both home and work offices would not be a distraction. However, we did not anticipate our participants finding shared meaning in our interviews based on their connections to our environments. Specifically, having pictures of our children visible or hearing children in the background during interviews unintentionally shared our parenting status. We believe this connection did not impose on the contextual information of the data, and more likely, strengthened the interviewee-researcher rapport.

Following Padgett's (2017) guidelines to provide opportunity for flexibility, we offered all of our participants the choice of interview location, allowing participants to choose a location in which they feel most comfortable (Padgett, 2017). The flexibility of using Skype for qualitative interviews had an additional benefit for the researchers in this study, as both researchers had similar characteristics as the participants (e.g., female academics with young children). Using Skype allowed us to conduct research interviews in the evening, after children were asleep, or squeezed into small pockets of free time, which were not large enough to allow for travel time to another location.

There are limitations to this exploration of the use of Skype for qualitative interviewing. This paper discusses the perspectives of a small group of participants who chose to participate in a Skype interview. Therefore, the perspectives of participants who chose telephone or FTF interviews were not included in this discussion, although there are likely differences in participants based on preferred interview type (Meho, 2006). Exploring participants' experiences and reasons for choosing the telephone or FTF interviews would deepen the field's understanding of participants' attitudes towards these types of interviews. The participants in this study were unique from many research participants, as they were highly educated and either currently or recently enrolled in doctoral programs, meaning many had probably been exposed to newer technologies through their universities. This limits the transferability of these findings to other groups of mothers, as this is a unique group of women in terms of education and access to technology. This study used Skype exclusively, versus other types of online technology (e.g., FaceTime or video conferencing), so some of these findings may be unique to this particular technology. As this research is qualitative, the results cannot be generalized, but they may inform our understanding of some of the benefits and limitations of interviewing via internet technology such as Skype.

Using Skype for qualitative interviewing offers significant benefits for both researchers and participants. Researchers benefit from affordability and ease of recruitment and flexibility of scheduling, while participants' experiences suggest that participants see significant benefits of using Skype as an interviewing tool. Considering the possibility of technological challenges, qualitative researchers are encouraged to have an intervention plan to address potential technological issues. As a qualitative interviewing tool, Skype offers the potential to address some of the challenges of qualitative interviewing by allowing flexibility in terms of time and space of interview, while maintaining the participant's privacy and allowing them to be

interviewed in a location in which they are most comfortable (Hanna, 2012; Oates, 2015). Skype is recommended as an additional tool for qualitative interviewing.

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