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The potentials and pitfalls of using Skype for qualitative (longitudinal) interviews

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Abstract

The use of digital communication technologies has become increasingly commonplace in social research. Yet, sparse attention has been paid to the potential of such technologies in Qualitative Longitudinal Research (QLR). This paper explores the implications of introducing one such technology, internet video calls (e.g. Skype, FaceTime, Google Hangouts), as a new mode of data collection into an established QLR study that has primarily generated data using biographical interviews conducted in participants' homes. The paper draws on the 'Your Space' project; a decade-long study following the lives of up to 52 young people from across Britain. Funded as one of eleven ESRC National Centre for Research Method's 'Methodological Innovation Projects' the most recent phase of the project investigates the implications of shifting from physical co-present interviewing to remote modes on key issues for QLR research such as sample maintenance, research relationship continuity, and rapport. In doing so, it assesses whether internet video calls might be a useful means of conducting short 'catch-up' interviews between the main waves of data collection, or as an alternative way of carrying out case study intensive interviews.

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Introduction

The way we communicate in both our professional and personal lives has changed in recent years; digital technologies are now a feature of everyday interaction. Similarly such technologies are starting to form an integral part of the toolkit of many social scientists (Hine 2000, 2005, 2008, Mann and Stewart 2000, Murthy 2008, Gibson 2010, Seitz 2015). Whilst the use of audio-only online interviews and asynchronous means of communicating online has been discussed for over two decades (Deakin and Wakefield 2014), video capabilities; being able to see a participant face-to-face online is a much more recent phenomenon that has undoubtedly been aided by the vast increase in internet usage and the reliability of broadband connections (Saumure and Given n.d.). The increasing availability of a multiplicity of digital communication technologies coupled with technological advances in recent years present new and exciting opportunities for recruiting participants, carrying out fieldwork and publicising research findings (Murthy 2008, Sullivan 2012, Deakin and Wakefield 2014). Online interviewing or mediated interaction is commonly regarded as part of the new 'methodological frontier' (Deakin and Wakefield 2014: 605). Yet, physical co-present interviewing has generally remained the accepted practice; the 'gold standard' of qualitative research as it is said to afford 'thicker information, body talk and communication efficiency' (Rettie 2009: p. 422; see also Boden and Molotch 1994, Norvick 2008, Hay-Gibson 2009, Deakin and Wakefield 2014). Nonetheless, as Rosalind Edwards and Janet Holland (2013) argue '... there have been dramatic changes in communication technology and qualitative interviewing must adapt if it is to survive' (p. 95).

Sparse attention has also been paid to the potential of such technologies in Qualitative Longitudinal Research (QLR), beyond maintaining contact, in part due to concerns about accessibility and confidentiality. Yet, the possibilities of digital media in QLR are starting to emerge (Thomson and McLeod 2015). This paper assesses the transformative potential (and pitfalls) of introducing an established technology – internet video calls or real-time audio/video link-up using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) applications such as Skype or FaceTime¹ - into an established QLR study that has, to date, generated data using in-depth interviews and activities, with the researcher regularly visiting participant's homes. Working with the same sample of young people presents a unique opportunity to compare experiences of conducting interviews using different modes on the interview encounter. In doing so the paper focuses on what is a largely uncharted methodological territory and aims to address the lack of critical reflection on the implications of mediated interview modes on factors that matter to qualitative researchers - such as sampling, rapport, disclosure, data quality, interaction and the research relationship (see also Rettie 2009, Sullivan 2012). Indeed, Jessica R Sullivan (2012) argues for the validation of such 'new' methods. Whilst considering technicalities and practicalities the paper seeks to move beyond an empiricist perspective to look in detail at the implications of mediated communication on interaction in the interview encounter.

The paper is divided into three sections. Part I begins by outlining the QLR study on which I draw. It then summarises what are commonly regarded as the key issues of

¹The potential of video telephony in qualitative longitudinal research: A participatory and interactionist approach to assessing remoteness and rapport' is one of 11 Methodological Innovation Projects funded by the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods (2013 – 2015).

concern for qualitative (longitudinal) researchers before detailing the analytic frameworks that shaped the project. Part II focuses on practical issues, including technicalities, flows of contact, mode preferences, resources, accessibility, flexibility and reliability. Part III is concerned with the implications of shifting from physical co-present to mediated communication on interactional issues including rapport, shared frame and involvement, non-verbal gestures, disclosure, breaking rules, supportive interchanges, settings, props and analysis. The paper draws to a close offering reflections for those considering incorporating internet video calls into both short-term and longitudinal work.

PART I: CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Part I sets the scene for the paper detailing the study's approach to data collection and analysis. It also summarises what are commonly regarded as key issues of concern for QLR researchers.

Case study: Your Space

The 'Your Space: Siblings and Friends' project (www.yourspaceproject.co.uk) has been following the lives of up to 52 young people from across Britain for over 10 years². Participants come from a diverse range of backgrounds and live in a variety of family circumstances that have shifted for some over the course of the study. Throughout, the substantive focus has been on the meanings, experiences and flows of prescribed and chosen relationships, and how these relate to young people's sense of self as their individual and family biographies unfold. Participants were originally recruited to take part in one of three studies that formed part of the Families & Social Capital ESRC Research Group programme of work (2003-2007). Your Space then became part of the ESRC Timescapes Programme (2007-2011), a major UK QLR initiative (www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk) which enabled a further two Waves of data to be generated. Most recently it has been funded as a methodological innovation project by the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods (2013-2015). For further details about previous phases of the project please see Weller and Edwards, with Stephenson (2011).

Participants, born between 1989 and 1996, were interviewed in 2003/5 (wave 1; aged 6 to 13), 2007 (wave 2; aged 10 to 17), 2009 (wave 3; aged 12 to 19) and 2013 (wave 4; aged 17 to 23). Methods used in waves 1 to 3 comprised a flexible range of tools including photography, network mapping, timelines, and vignettes, consolidated by an in-depth, semi-structured interview (Weller and Edwards, with Stephenson 2011). These interviews, in the main, took place in participant's homes³. Participants could opt to be interviewed individually or with their sibling(s). Each discussion explored: significant life events; change and continuity in participant's relationships with family members; the significance of friends; and hopes for the future, all within the context of everyday life at home, at school/college/work and in the local community. Between interviews participants were invited to take part in a range of interim activities to help maintain contact and to collect more data. These included online and public engagement activities (for further details see Weller 2012).

²Conducted with Prof. Rosalind Edwards, University of Southampton.

³ During wave 3 two participants chose to be interviewed outside the family home; one in her mother's workplace and another in her local community centre.

The focus of the fourth wave of interviews signalled a methodological departure for the project incorporating mediated and remote communication rather than physical co-present interviewing. Using widely available VoIP platforms (e.g. Skype or FaceTime) that have the potential to mirror physical co-present conversations through the use of two-way real-time communication comprising both audio and video, this phase of the project had two foci. First the study sought to explore the potential of internet video calls for providing 'catch up' data about participants' lives between researcher visits, thereby helping to ensure their long-term engagement. Second the project considered the implications for using such interviews as a time-efficient and cost-effective alternative to, or augmentation of, face-to-face co-present interviews. Drawing on an established QLR study provides a unique opportunity to compare two different interview modes with the same sample of young people.

Whilst it is not my intention to engage in well-rehearsed debates about ethics in QLR (for summaries see Holland, Thomson and Henderson 2006, Neale 2013) there are some supplementary elements that I will explore and weave into the methodological discussion in this paper. The Your Space project has been framed by an ethic of care (see also Neale and Hanna 2012) with emphasis placed on the situated and evolving nature of research ethics over time (see also Edwards and Mauthner 2002). In QLR ventures potential ethical concerns are similar to those facing the wider social research community but over the course of time and as emotional connections generally grow issues such as the negotiation of consent, the maintenance of anonymity and confidentiality, intrusion and privacy, and power and caring relations generally become more complex and involved (Holland, Thomson and Henderson 2006, Edwards and Weller 2012, Weller 2012, Thomson and McLeod 2015). Such issues are further amplified in QLR work that involves children and young people (Holland, Thomson and Henderson 2006). The introduction of mediated modes of communication into the project also necessitated a new focus on online research adding a further layer of ethical consideration, particularly in relation to the safeguarding of young people online (Battles 2010, Jones 2011, Markham and Buchanan 2012, Janghorban, Latifnejad Roudsari and Taghipour 2014, YoungDigital 2015).

Throughout the course of the Your Space project participants have been assured of confidentiality with one caveat; should a child protection issue or another similar concern be voiced then the researcher would have to disclose this to a third party in consultation with the participant. Although the majority are now over the age of 18 a similar approach has continued to be taken. Consent has been continuously negotiated and not viewed as a one-off discussion and/or signing of consent forms. This is well-established best practice in both childhood and youth studies and QLR (e.g. France, Bendelow and Williams 2000, Birch and Miller 2002, Holland, Thomson and Henderson 2006, Murphy and Dingwall 2007, Edwards and Weller 2012, Neale and Hanna 2012, Neale 2013). Prior to each new interview participants and their parents were sent information letters and leaflets detailing the purpose, process and potential outcomes of the project. Consent was then gained from both parents and the young people involved. For participants it was recorded verbally at the beginning of the interview and then reaffirmed at the end, once the young people are aware of what they have divulged. For this most recent phase participants were informed of the new methodological focus. Only two were under the age of 18. In these cases parents were given the opportunity

opt out on behalf of their children. Our approach to gaining consent to participate in an interview has, on the whole, been verbal and this was not altered by the shift to remote interview modes.

Key issues for qualitative (longitudinal) interviewing

There is a gap in methodological discussion of and knowledge about the possibilities and drawbacks in mediated data collection and using internet video calls in QLR. Debates about remote modes in longitudinal research take place in the large scale survey field around the implications for retaining and working with an established sample, while considerations of data collection by phone/online in the qualitative field have not addressed longitudinal studies. Key areas of concern in relation to longitudinal surveys involve cost efficiency as against sample maintenance and data quality (see Dex and Gurney 2011, Groves 2011, Couper 2012). The cost of research per respondent can be considerably reduced by using remote rather than co-present collection, in travel and subsistence and researcher time. Remote techniques reduce expenditure in working with large nationally distributed samples allowing the flexibility to break and/or resume discussions thus overcoming the challenges of one-off visits, particularly to isolated areas (Hewson, Yule, Laurent and Vogel 2003). For longitudinal survey research, however, there are concerns about retaining sample members over time; participants have prior experience of, or are familiar with a particular sort of involvement in the survey, running the risk of falling online uptake rates and data quality. An element of this debate is to do with 'rapport'; that it is the social relationship and interaction between field interviewers and survey participants that supports survey participation and the collection of quality data (Carley-Baxter 2012).

Rapport, conceived conceptually as an orientation towards 'euphoria' or 'ease' in interaction and a 'working consensus', is an aim and established element of quality in qualitative interviews (Oakley 1981, Duncombe and Jessop 2012, Kvale and Brinkman 2009). Debates about what constitutes quality are often related to the realist or constructionist approach adopted (Hammersley 2012). Most qualitative researchers regard rapport as a crucial aspect of interviews. Researcher efforts to minimize social distance, establish trust and being 'insiders together' during the interview, are regarded as important for participant disclosure and thus data quality (Oakley 1981, Duncombe and Jessop 2012). Assessments of the use of mediated as against physical co-presence in qualitative research then, largely focus on the establishment of rapport, quality of disclosure and concerns about the potential lack of paralinguistic cues (Markham 2006). Sparse attention has been paid to the introduction of such methods into studies with an established history of physical co-presence in repeat interviews, with discussion often confined to one-off or snapshot studies. Moreover, little is known about whether prior establishment of personal research rapport might feed into and shape the continued involvement of participants in a longitudinal study. What matters then, for QLR is the fostering of a long-term connection with participants in which the relationship, various forms of interaction, and rapport are in mutually supportive relationships that enable the detailed discussion of their lives. This paper addresses whether this might be achieved through remote interviews and via mediated communication.

Frameworks for assessing the differences between interview modes

The project adopted two approaches in tandem to assessing the implications of introducing internet video calls. The first was a participatory approach taking into

account the views of Your Space participants. Comparisons of mediated as against physical co-present modes in the literature tend to rely on researchers' judgments of the successes and drawbacks of the interview interaction in terms of data quality. Participants' experiences and assessments of the process have received far less attention. In youth research, however, participatory approaches have become common practice with some studies involving children and young people in both analysis and project evaluation (e.g. Kellet 2005, Coad and Evans 2007, van Blerk and Ansell 2007, Coppock 2010, Percy-Smith and Thomas 2010). Your Space has, from the outset, involved participants in the research process to some degree. In the first wave of data collection participants could shape their interview by selecting from a menu of activities each designed to help them communicate their views and experiences. From wave 2 onwards a Panel of Advisors was established with four young people actively involved in consultations over project design. Feedback on the interview experience and involvement in the project was garnered at the end of waves 3 and 4 (Weller and Edwards, with Stephenson 2011).

For wave 4 the entire sample were invited to take part in a short 'catch-up' interview, up to 30 minutes in duration, the purpose of which was to assess the implications on relational issues (e.g. rapport, willingness to divulge) and practical issues (e.g. quality of online connection, ease of use of technology). The substantive focus of the catch-up discussions was on trajectories to adulthood during economic change. In addition all participants were invited to provide their own assessment of video telephony compared to past encounters in terms of the effects of the shift in mode on: (i) interview experience; (ii) disclosure; (iii) imagined future engagement; and (iv) relationship with the researcher. Verbal feedback was garnered at the end of each interview in a similar way to the wave 3 interviews. Participant's views were also invited anonymously via an online survey. All such material was analysed thematically across the cases.

The second phase of analysis was framed by Erving Goffman's interactionist conceptual tools (1972, 1974, 1983), extending his work beyond a focus on everyday interactions, to include mediated communication (Rettie 2009). Goffman's aim was to develop a theory of everyday social interaction by documenting and classifying, as well as, highlighting the significance of the seemingly mundane or banal, the subtleties and nuances, the minutiae of everyday life and challenging us to re-consider the taken-for-granted (Manning 1992). An interactionist approach regards social life as accomplished through everyday actions in which participants uphold certain shared definitions of reality through coordination and mutual monitoring. In his 1956 work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* Goffman argued that what we do and say is shaped by an abiding sets of assumptions and rules or instructions that we generally take-for-granted. In his analysis and reflections on Goffman's writings Philip Manning (1992) helpfully elucidates the four main assumptions underpinning everyday life: (i) 'situational propriety' or an everyday understanding of how to carry on in social situations including how this is determined by context; (ii) 'involvement' or the predilection to be engaged in or disengaged from an activity; (iii) 'accessibility' or what we permit others to know of ourselves; and (iv) 'civil inattention' or the respect afforded to or expected from strangers.

Aspects of interaction as framed by these assumptions were explored across the Your Space interviews both those using physical co-present and mediated modes to see

whether speech acts and non-verbal interactions are manifest and interpreted in different ways (see Roberts 2012) and if, in certain contexts, the researcher and/or participant exert agency and consciously manipulate and shape social interactions (Manning 1992). Using Goffman's interactional tools it is possible to view the interview as a 'focused gathering' (see Manning 1992). For this element of the assessment, ten participants, selected on the basis of age, gender, geographical location, class, were asked to take part in an in-depth interview, akin to those conducted for waves 1-3. Lasting up to 1½ hours the interview explored in-depth, change and continuity in the course of their trajectories to adulthood. These interviews were then explored alongside each participant's wave 2 and 3 interviews⁴. A key issue in comparing the nature of rapport and content in mediated communication as against previous physical co-present interviews was that difference may be due to age, as participants were up to 4 years older than for their previous interview. This was addressed by selecting both younger and older participants, so that any age implications could be identified cross-sectionally, across waves. The extended interviews comprised equal numbers of young women and men aged 17-22. Seven in ten came from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds with four in ten classified as working-class.

PART II: PRACTICAL ISSUES

This section focuses on the technicalities and practicalities of both using internet video calls in remote interviewing and of introducing such technologies as a new mode of interviewing into an established QLR study.

Technicalities

The fourth wave of data collection for Your Space focused on the use of free, accessible VoIP platforms that enabled synchronous communication (see also Bertrand and Bourdeau 2010), with video capabilities rather than commercial video conferencing facilities. Participants were offered a choice over their preferred mode being able to elect for a FaceTime, Skype or phone interview. With functionality ever increasing both FaceTime and Skype offer the possibility of audio or video calls, instant messaging, video-conferencing/group discussions and file transfer. Skype is more universal as it is accessible to participants with Apple, Linux and Windows systems. Since completing these interviews the availability of new platforms and multiple mobile devices has burgeoned, offering social researchers many more possibilities. For example, FaceTime, Google+ Hangouts and Skype all enable audio and/or video interviews with individuals or a group of individuals located in up to 10 different places making collective interaction with a disparate sample a possibility. The sheer pace of technological change offers researchers an increasing range of possibilities for incorporating digital communication technologies into different phases of the research process, not just data collection. At the same time this presents challenges particularly for QLR researchers as such technologies and their popularity in the public domain are likely to shift between waves meaning that researchers must not only keep abreast of change but continually reflect on the implications of different modes on interactions within the encounter.

The wave 4 interviews mainly comprised Skype-to-Skype, or Skype-to-mobile calls. Using Skype to contact participants via their mobile or landline phone enabled me to

⁴ In my analysis I have re-visited waves 2 and 3 only as I was not the only field researcher for wave 1.

use the same recording software to capture all of the conversations, regardless of mode. The introduction of remote modes presented participants with new responsibilities such as setting up and checking equipment with the onus on them having access to a good broadband internet connection, a webcam and a microphone, or a mobile phone or tablet with a sufficient mobile data package, along with the latest version of the software required (Seitz 2015). The shift to remote modes, therefore, presented many participants with additional preparation work prior to the interview.

The means of recording the interview is dependent on whether the capture of video as well as audio material is desired. There are many free or low-cost apps that enable the recording of audio-only although care must be taken over limits to data file size and that the app is capable of recording long interviews to a high standard. I used 'Pamela for Skype' (www.pamela.biz) to record Skype-to-Skype calls and Skype-to-phone/mobile calls (see also Bertrand and Bourdeau 2010). Alternative packages include IM Capture (www.imcapture.com) or Evaer (www.evaer.com). These software packages enable the audio and visual recording of both the researcher and participant. 'Pamela for Skype', for instance, can be set to work in sync with Skype commencing recording as soon as a connection is made between the two (or more) parties. In tandem I also used a quality digital recorder to back up the audio material as an unreliable internet connection can result in the failure of the recording software, although this was a rare occurrence. I tested all equipment and software before each interview including: the alignment of the webcam to the screen; microphone, speaker and headphone settings; and the recording software. As Sullivan (2012) outlines likely technical challenges include '... issues with sound quality, microphones, webcam malfunctions, and probably most common, a lag in the live feed. Things like internet connection speeds and the quality of the computer also come into play. To conduct this type of research, a person needs to be aware of this and have backup plans prepared in advance' (p. 59). The main challenge then is the lack of control the researcher has over some of the equipment and, in the event of technical difficulties, the lack of opportunity to take remedial action.

Communication modes and flows of contact in QLR

Sample retention and attrition are key concerns of any longitudinal endeavour (Weller 2010, 2012, Patrick 2012, Farrall, Hunter, Sharpe and Calverley 2015). Yet the emphasis on retention rates as an indicator of the 'success' of a project fails to take into account the ebb and flow of participation. In Henderson, Holland, McGrellis, Sharpe and Thomson's (2007) ground-breaking qualitative longitudinal study 'Inventing Adulthood' it was not uncommon for young people to withdraw from one phase of the project only to participate again during subsequent interviews. Similarly, one Your Space participant, Jim, declined to take part in the third wave and, given his response, appeared to withdraw from the project completely only to enthusiastically take part in a phone interview for the most recent wave. As will be discussed shortly the shift to using remote modes of interviewing both enabled and encouraged his re-engagement with the project. Offering participants a choice over their preferred mode of communication seemed key to catching up with a significant proportion of the original sample (see also Hanna 2012, Deakin and Wakefield 2014). Some flows of contact were not directly with the young person. In three cases I caught up with their lives via their mothers either over the phone or through email correspondence, offering a new form of remote communication that at least permitted me to re-connect with participant's lives even if I did not interact with them directly. The long-term research relationship I had with

family members seem to afford them a sense of obligation to the project even if their children were not in a position to take part themselves. Regardless of interview mode then it is important to acknowledge that QLR research is about much more than a series of interview encounters but encompasses wide-ranging interactions between interviews and with other family members, something the current conceptualisation of retention in longitudinal work fails to capture.

As part of the project's remit, and in line with current drives in social research to preserve material for re-use and secondary analysis, the dataset was intended, with participants' permission, to be archived. As in previous phases of the study written consent was sought for the archiving of participants' materials. Authors such as Sullivan (2012) have noted the challenges of obtaining written consent online. At the end of the third interview participants were invited to consent to the archiving of anonymised versions of all of their previous interviews and accompanying materials with 96 per cent agreeing to do so. Participants had a foregrounding in the process in the lead up to the third wave and were sent information leaflets and a copy of the consent form in advance, which was then discussed in the physical co-present setting at the end of the interview with signatures obtained at the time if participants were willing. A similar approach was adopted for the fourth wave but with the omission of physical co-presence and the opportunity to gather signed forms in person. Only 44 per cent (16/36) of the sample returned completed 'consent to archive' forms for wave 4. The physical co-presence of a home visit enabled a degree of negotiation between the researcher and participant and perhaps a greater sense of obligation on the part of the latter. The expectation placed on participants not just to complete but return the form, by post or email, entailed a far greater commitment and offered the opportunity to withhold consent either intentionally or through non-response.

Mode preferences for 'digital natives'

Youth researchers have been particularly active in developing new ways of working with young people, honing in on popular methods of communication (e.g. Alderson 2001, Punch 2002, Barker and Weller 2003, Kellet 2005, Weller 2006, Croghan, Griffen, Hunter and Phoenix 2008, Coppock, 2010, Gillies and Robinson 2012, Mand 2012, Weller 2012). In order to help sustain long-term engagement in the Your Space study it seemed apt to consider using digital communication technologies with a sample that might be regarded as 'digital natives'; young people who have never known life without such technologies. Following Sullivan's (2012) reflections on samples for which online interviewing might not be so appropriate it was important not to make assumptions about young people's interest and confidence in, and engagement with such technologies.

Feedback from Your Space participants was very diverse in terms of their mode preferences. Some were willing to participate in a remote interview using mediated communication but would have preferred a physical co-present meeting, as stated by Alannah⁵:

'To be honest I was quite nervous. It really sounds silly but I was quite nervous speaking to be interviewed on the phone. I'm not really a phone person'.

⁵ Participants chose their own pseudonyms.

Some were apprehensive about communicating remotely, but opted to take part on the basis of the strength of the research relationship and connection felt to the project, whilst others valued the flexibility and convenience offered by an online or phone interview (Janghorban et al. 2014).

Two young women were deterred from taking part; they simply felt too shy to talk online thereby contradicting other recent suggestions that such forms of interaction may be more suited to those of an introverted character (Seitz 2015). Others expressed nervousness at the new interview mode although the levels of rapport and disclosure suggested that their apprehension impacted on initial willingness to participate rather than the interview encounter in its entirety. Despite then common assumptions about young people as 'digital natives' it was important to provide the Your Space sample with a range of communication options.

In terms of preferences 12 of the 36 elected to be interviewed using Skype. Three originally chose FaceTime but technical challenges (in two instances concerning the participants' own devices and in one case the Wi-Fi connection in my institution) prevented us from doing so. Six were interviewed using a Skype-to-landline call and a further 15 a Skype-to-mobile call. There did not appear to be major differences between the interview mode preferences of the young women and men involved. Participants from middle-class backgrounds were more likely to be interviewed via Skype or by mobile phone, whereas those from working-class backgrounds tended to elect to be interviewed either by mobile or landline phone. Young people willing to take part in an extended interview were more likely to opt for Skype. Those preferring to participate in a short catch-up discussion expressed a preference for speaking via the phone, often their own mobile. Preferences were generally determined by practical considerations such as convenience rather than necessarily being the participant's most favoured mode of communication. Survey respondents were asked to select a preferred interview mode for (potential) future interviews. A quarter requested a home visit; half expressed a preference for an online interview; whilst a further 25 per cent stated that a phone interview would be most appropriate. These findings, therefore, alluded to a general but not wholly universal preference for mediated communication.

Resourcing modes

For longitudinal research – both qualitative and quantitative – issues of cost efficiency are considered against sample maintenance and data quality (see, Dex and Gurney 2011, Groves 2011, Couper 2012). As previously mentioned, the cost of research, in terms of expenditure on travel and subsistence and researcher time can be reduced by using remote rather than co-present interviews (Hay-Gibson 2009, Cater 2011, Deakin and Wakefield 2014, Janghorban et al. 2014, Seitz 2015). It may also result in a more environmentally sustainable approach to fieldwork eradicating the need to travel. Remote techniques reduce expenditure in working with large nationally distributed samples allowing the flexibility to break or resume discussions thus overcoming the challenges of one-off visits, particularly to isolated areas (Hewson et al. 2003). Your Space comprises a nationally distributed sample dispersed across the length and breadth of England, Scotland and Wales, with few clustered in the same neighbourhoods. The primary residence of many shifted over time. By wave 4 twenty-two per cent were living independently, and a further 17 per cent were living between

places, often the parental home and university, visiting each to varying degrees. Costs for (public) transport, accommodation and subsistence for this latest phase of interviews, had they been completed in or near participants' current homes, was calculated at just under £3500. Weighing up the implications of shifting from physical co-present to remote modes on researchers' time is, however, more complex. The wave 3 interviews were completed at an average rate of 2 per week during a period of 6 months (working on a full-time basis), whilst the wave 4 interviews were completed at a rate of 1 per day over a three month period (working on a part-time basis), although the majority of the wave 4 interviews were more brief. That said preparation time for QLR interviewing increases exponentially over time with more data to re-visit with each new round of interviews. Studying in detail participants' past accounts is vital to (re)understanding aspects of their lives, to construct questions that enable them to reflect on the past, and to help foster rapport. The period of fieldwork for the remote mode was far more intensive with interviews completed in greater succession. The possibility of carrying out more interviews in the course of a day meant that I was often switching between accounts having to not only recall the experiences of several participants within a short space of time but also having to remember points raised across three previous in-depth interviews. This coupled with other aspects of fieldwork preparation such as the completion of field notes, and follow-up administration (e.g. thank you letters, consent forms, feedback survey) suggests that the use of remote modes do result in a saving in researcher time in 'the field' but that this is offset to some degree by the cumulative nature of preparation of QLR with each new wave of data collection and, as will be discussed later in this paper, the greater propensity for participants to alter the arrangement.

Accessibility and flexibility

A major advantage of using remote interviews for both one-off and longitudinal studies is the potential they provide for widening participation through time-space compression. Sullivan (2012) talks of the enhancement and widening of access through the possibilities of conducting remote modes of interviewing on a multitude of mobile devices. The nationally distributed nature of the Your Space sample lent itself to remote interviewing, as would studies located in multiple regions or countries (Deakin and Wakefield 2014, Janghorban et al. 2014, Seitz 2015). Convenient times can be agreed to suit a group whose members might be based in different time zones. Remote modes are, therefore, valuable in over-coming both time and distance and may be suited to carrying out research with those living in isolated or challenging environments, as well as those leading busy lives or considered 'harder to reach' (see also Hewson et al. 2003, Sedgwick and Spiers 2009, Cater 2011, Sullivan 2012, Deakin and Wakefield 2014, Seitz 2015, Saumure and Given n.d.). Internet video calls are incredibly versatile as discussions can be broken off and resumed at a time appropriate for all parties. One Your Space survey respondent suggested that a remote interview could be completed in sections rather than one long discussion.

As noted above the introduction of internet video calls appears to have deterred self-conscious participants from taking part. A Skype-to-mobile interview also proved challenging for one young man who disclosed a hearing impairment after we had begun, that had not been brought to light in previous interviews even though he had been candid about other disabilities. For the majority using remote modes made it easier for them to continue being a part the project, especially those leading busy or transient lives residing between two places such as their parental home and university or college,

or in temporary accommodation. During wave 4 participants were aged between 17 and 23 and two-thirds were studying in Further or Higher Education Institutions, with 14 per cent in full-time work and a further 20 per cent unemployed. For a small minority, remote modes were the only means by which they could take part (see also Deakin and Wakefield 2014). Those staying temporarily with parents were more likely to use Skype than those in more precarious or short-term arrangements.

A benefit then of remote over physical co-present modes is the flexibility and versatility they provide for both researcher and participant (Hanna 2012). Convenience was very important for many Your Space participants, as the following extracts highlight:

‘Skype is something it’s easier for us like I mean I am really busy so just being able to still be in my pyjamas or have dinner and be able to talk to you is much better than actually arranging a date because I might not be free because a lot of things crop up’ (Izzy).

‘You can be anywhere and still take part in the project’ (Anon, survey).

The need for flexibility and versatility in the project were important to considerations of continued participation given the uncertainty of where their futures lie in terms of both time and geography, as these two short extracts from two young women living away from home at the time of the fourth interview illustrate:

‘[Future participation] It depends where I will be but Skype and the phone would probably be better’ (Holly).

‘Phone or Skype... I don’t mind any of them to be honest. It just depends. Obviously in the future I might be working shifts ... sort of night shifts or something in veterinary nursing so it depends where I am at the time’ (Daisy).

The ease and efficiency of remote modes was emphasised by one survey respondent who noted how, by using remote modes, we had been able to instantaneously schedule an interview for the same day that I had made the initial enquiry (see also Hay-Gibson 2009).

With flexibility comes the increased likelihood of alterations, sometimes at short notice, or absenteeism, as participants are aware that I have not travelled to visit them. I experienced a period of demoralisation with a spate of ‘no shows’ towards the latter stages of the fieldwork. Hannah Deakin and Kelly Wakefield (2014) too found a greater incidence of absenteeism but argued that this was less likely where there was a pre-existing research relationship (see also Janghorban et al. 2014). Even though during a small minority of home visits participants had sometimes been late or had, despite reminders, overlooked our arrangement I felt more in control of the situation standing at their doorstep than I did sitting at work looking at a blank screen. I soon grew to be more flexible and to accommodate changes with little notice. Your Space participant, Alisha, for instance, had been invited at the last minute to a lecture and requested that we bring the interview forward by one hour prompting me to have to set up the equipment in a makeshift manner as our dedicated video conferencing room was already in use. Another participant DJ Kizzel simply forgot our arrangement and had not

woken early enough. We re-scheduled for the following week. The greater propensity to alter the arrangement and the implications for this on researcher time offset some of the savings made from not having to travel to visit participants. The lack of physical proximity perhaps meant that some participants feel less personal accountability or social pressure.

Reliability and quality

Skype generally proved to be more reliable than FaceTime. That said the uptake of internet video calls (as opposed to a phone interview) was very much dependent on the participant's perceptions of the reliability of internet access where they were living and of the general dependability of the application. A number of participants assumed Skype would not work and opted for a phone interview. Even those who elected to be interviewed by Skype had some concerns about the potential unreliability:

'...meeting up would have been more suitable because 'cos ... I dunno you're able to sort out your equipment beforehand you know what's going to happen whereas with Skype you never know what's going to happen. You never know if you're going to hear each other. You never know if the recording's going to turn out as ...'
(Daniel B).

'It's been fine actually but the only problem is usually my Skype' (Danielle).

Two interviews commenced as video calls but were completed as audio-only interactions as we could not stream the video effectively. Participants were not always forthcoming in pointing out technical problems, for instance that they had lost the video connection and had not be able to view me for all or part of the interview as this extract from the latter stages of Malaky's interview illustrates:

'I think Skype's just as easy really. It's nice to be face-to-face with someone in any situation but it's pretty good. It's pretty fine. I haven't been able to see you at all ...'.

Such issues highlight the importance of regularly checking all equipment and seeking feedback from participants as to their experience of the quality of the audio, and if appropriate video during the interview. Doing so undoubtedly has implications for the flow of conversation and interaction order in the interview. It also represents another departure from the physical co-present interview where the researcher generally has more control over the 'successes' of the technology.

Poor quality audio really does make the task of both the researcher and participant difficult with much energy consumed carefully listening to responses. Sally Seitz (2015) refers to 'dropped calls' and 'pauses' as potential breaks in the flow of conversation caused by technical problems. A strong and sustained connection is essential to the flow of conversation, for rapport and for avoiding misunderstandings. Half of all survey respondents stated that they had experienced some form of technical problem either before or during the interview. Most were able to see me all of the time, with only a small minority able to see me 'hardly at all'. In terms of audibility, half reported being able to hear me all of the time whilst a similar number could hear me for the much part. In a small number of interviews we experienced false starts, occasions where initially it was difficult to either establish an audio and video connection or to sustain one. At

times I had to physically re-position myself closer to the microphone or terminate the call in an attempt to establish a clearer connection. Participants familiar with Skype were well-versed in the technical challenges and we worked together to alleviate the problem, often terminating the video call and starting again. In a very small minority of instances, primarily using FaceTime, we had to shift to another technology and were able to do so at short notice. Some of the Skype-to-mobile interviews were plagued by an echo on the audio, but this was only in a very small minority of cases and both parties were able to hear one another. The echo just proved to be a distraction that required both researcher and participant to listen more intently. Two participants experienced a flat mobile or cordless phone battery. Whilst some of these technical challenges might appear mundane they do, on the whole, represent quite different problems to those faced during physical co-present interviews and, as will be discussed later in this paper, are implicated in disrupting the flow of conversation and in reshaping the focus of the interview from substantive aims to technicalities.

PART III: INTERACTIONAL ISSUES

This section moves away from an empiricist approach to consider the implications of introducing mediated communication and remote interview modes on the interaction between researcher and participant when both are accustomed to physical co-present encounters. In doing so attention is paid to issues that matter to QLR researchers including the maintenance of a long-term research relationship, rapport, non-verbal gestures, disclosure, disruptions, settings, props and analysis. These reflections are shaped by the writings of Goffman.

Rapport

Judy Y Chu (2014) argues that ‘...the quality of collected data depends, in part on qualities of the research-participant relationship’ (p. 4). For QLR work rapport is fundamentally important and regarded as salient for disclosure and the long-term research relationship. Building rapport in mediated interaction without having met a participant can prove challenging although there is evidence to suggest that much work can be done prior to the interview by, for example exchanging emails or photographs (Deakin and Wakefield 2014, Seitz 2015). I have a long-term relationship with the Your Space participants and we had met in person on at least two occasions. The majority asserted that they were comfortable with the shift to online interviewing and deemed it suitable for the project. Nonetheless, only 42 per cent of survey respondents stated that they would have agreed to take part online had we not shared a pre-existing research relationship inferring some degree of reluctance or hesitation amongst the remaining participants about engaging in a research project using mediated forms of communication. It is perhaps then during the physical co-present encounter that rapport is more readily established and that positive experiences and a strong sense of connection in such meetings enables the successful incorporation of mediated interview modes into a study.

A key concern for qualitative work is whether both the researcher and participant interact differently in internet video interviews compared to physical co-present discussions. Whilst Seitz (2015) suggests that a loss of intimacy is a potential hazard in Skype interviews, Deakin and Wakefield (2014) have argued that ‘online interviews can

produce data as reliable and in-depth as that produced during face-to-face encounters' (p. 604). Yet little attention has been paid to the minutiae of the interaction. As previously asserted rapport is essential to minimizing social distance and establishing trust in qualitative interviews shaping what the respondent is prepared to say and the richness of the stories they narrate (Oakley 1981, Kvale and Brinkman 2009, Duncombe and Jessop 2012). Through participant feedback and diachronic analysis studying cases over time I sought to understand differences in the sense in which both researcher and participants felt at ease during the encounter. The majority of Your Space survey respondents rated the experience as 'good' with 83 per cent regarding it as 'good as a home visit' and all described feeling comfortable with being interviewed remotely.

The following detailed exemplar is illustrative of continuity of rapport regardless of interview mode. It also highlights the distinct nature of some QLR relationships and the dangers that mediated communication bring to re-shaping the frame. Your Space participant Daniel had been involved in the study since 2003 and I had visited him in his parental home on three occasions; believing there to have been good rapport between us each time. We had kept in touch between interviews as Daniel was a member of the project's Panel of Advisors. During the fourth wave he was in his final year at University, and still living with his mother and father in East London. He elected to be interviewed via Skype, which for the most part was clear and audible. The interview lasted for just under one and a half hours. Daniel sat at his PC in his bedroom in close proximity to his webcam and I could view his head and torso. For me, his positioning made the encounter more intimate than in instances where the participant sat further away. Christian Licoppe and Julien Morel (2012) describe internet video and mobile calls as '... patterned, often alternating between a 'talking heads' arrangement, in which both participants are on screen and facing the camera, and moments in which they are producing various shots of their environment in line with their current interactional purposes' (p. 400). They argue that this orientation is the closest replication of Goffman's 'eye-to-eye huddle'. For some interviews then, mediated forms of communication can facilitate a more intimate connection providing a feeling of being in close proximity. They also suggest that this varies with the device used with mobile technologies often focusing on the 'headshot' and laptop computers the head and torso.

Daniel dressed in a similar manner and had the same demeanour – very friendly, polite and happy to take part – as he had done in previous interviews. Aside from adjusting his computer screen several times and swinging on his chair he was very focused on the conversation. He seemed pleased when I showed great interest in his achievements and was not afraid to talk about things that had not gone so well for him. I interpreted his approach to 'impression management' (Goffman 1956) as one of openness, honesty and reciprocity, of talking as an equal; as a friend. His body language gave a real sense of accessibility; that he was involved (and excited to be involved) in a way that was not radically different from my home visits. For the most part I could not view his hand gestures unless he raised them to his face - often when he was recounting less 'successful' elements of his life or when he was feeling partly expressive. The raising of his hands to cover parts of his face may be considered in Goffman's (1963) terms 'involvement shields' - or the propensity to avoid interaction physically or verbally - as signs of discomfort and a lack of confidence in the encounter.

We did discuss the challenges of establishing and maintaining eye contact during our Skype interview. From my perspective I was looking at Daniel the entire time but I was aware that my screen, fixed high on the meeting room wall, and webcam set to one side of the screen, were not in alignment. Whilst I felt I was making eye contact this was not necessarily what he experienced. Daniel commented on this saying:

‘That's another thing as well ... you're not talking eye-to-eye’ (see also Seitz 2015).

Through the lens of the webcam(s) then eye-to-eye contact becomes refracted giving the recipient a different impression to that perceived by the giver. That said, in the case of a small minority of the physical co-present interviews the space and location of seating was also not conducive to eye contact.

Daniel was, by his own admission, well-versed in sustaining connections with others online and the setting - his bedroom, his own space - and mode meant he felt under less pressure. Previous interviews have been conducted in the family's lounge, where on one occasion he had been uncomfortable with the disruptions and the possibility that others might overhear. This time the mode and setting seemed to afford him greater privacy.

What he divulged and the way in which this was articulated did not appear vastly different from our encounters in his home. What did differ was our experiences and view of the setting in which the interaction occurred, and Daniel's feelings of ease. The interview did not feel like a simple flow of questions and answers but was more akin to a conversation between friends with Daniel enquiring after my life; an albeit asymmetrical exchange as I asked more of him than he did of me. Good quality audio and video, along with the participant's ease and experience of communicating online and his proximity to the webcam made for an intimate research encounter; one in which he was afforded greater privacy from intrusion by family members and one in which the rapport between us was reminiscent and not vastly different to that experienced during home visits. Likening it to a home visit Daniel said:

‘... it's just like you are in front of me, so it's cool’.

Akin to Daniel's reflections one of the most striking observations made by participants was that whilst remote online interviews felt less formal or personal they were also experienced as ‘less daunting’. One participant Carl coined the term ‘pressure of presence’, he commented:

‘... there's less of a pressure of presence if you like ... nothing against you or anything (laughs). It's like when you doing interviews for unis... when you're sitting in a room with someone opposite you you feel a lot more under pressure than when it's over the computer, so I guess it does give you the freedom to sit back and actually think so in that way I think it was quite nice actually as pressure does get to me a little’.

Others also likened the formality of a home visit to a ‘professional interview’, experienced as more intrusive, anxiety-inducing or pressurised. Alternatively, the remote interview was conceived as a more informal, and indeed flexible, contribution to the research project akin to communicating with friends or peers. Ideas around the

'pressure of presence' were located in the spatiality of the encounter with many feeling more relaxed that they were in their own space separate from the researcher as articulated by Izzy:

'I'm in my own room and I'm on my own'.

In his work *'Relations in Public'* Goffman (1971) differentiated between alternative 'territories of self' referring to 'personal space' which Manning (1992) defines as surrounding '...individuals, marking an encroachment zone (p. 168). For many Your Space participants mediated forms of communication reduced encroachment into their own physical, personal spaces which aided their sense of ease in the encounter.

In remote interviews the encounter almost exclusively revolved around 'talk', rather than a home visit that was laden with other types of expectation such as being a good host, highlighted by Jessie:

'Someone coming to your house you have to sort of be a good hostess ... fetch a drink ... this is just easier to talk'.

Less pressure was also felt because the props of the research encounter, the interview schedule and recording equipment for instance, were hidden. This sentiment, echoed by other participants, chimes with Goffman's (1967) argument that physical co-presence runs the risk of exposure or embarrassment, and clearly shows how a different interview mode can shape the resultant conversation (see also Rettie 2009), thereby highlighting one of the greatest potentials of remote methods. Whilst this raises some interesting issues for qualitative research it is important to note that fostering rapport during the remote interviews is hinged, in part, on the long-term nature of the research relationships I had with participants. Whilst the character of these connections was/is diverse, ranging from more regular correspondence and exchange of news to intermittent communication tied solely to the purpose of the project and the organisation and completion of each interview, my understanding and experience of their (shifting) lives, relationships and personalities undoubtedly aided rapport. In these terms the QLR nature of the project facilitated the acceptance of the introduction of a new mode of interviewing.

Goffman was renowned for his use of metaphors (Manning 1992). In *'The Presentation of Self'* (1956) he outlined his dramaturgical approach, likening everyday interaction to a theatrical performance. Similarly, the qualitative interview scenario may be likened to a production with scripts (questions and responses) and roles with the interviewer and participant each interpreting the script and presenting themselves accordingly. Each may show a different side of themselves on stage and behind the scenes. This tunes the ear to considering the interview encounter as a performance and in considering the potentials and pitfalls of remote interviewing using mediated communication it is important to explore any differences in the performances of interlocutors between modes and how participants interpret the stage and present themselves (Roberts 2012). In reflecting on my own experiences I often felt more at ease during the remote interviews, able to sit comfortably without paying as much attention to my posture and body language, particularly in the audio-only interviews. Similarly I was also more able to study the interview schedule as we spoke - or following Goffman's dramaturgical

approach, follow the script and rehearse my lines - without being concerned to appear either incompetent as an interviewer or that I was not listening to the participant's response. This was of particular significance in the extended interviews where the topic guide was annotated in detail with excerpts from the previous interviews.

I was undoubtedly more self-conscious about what I was doing during the internet video calls than during phone interviews (playing with a pen or adjusting my papers) but perhaps less so than during a physically co-present interview where I am more conscious of my whole demeanour and how I act (and my perceptions of how I am expected to act) within someone else's space especially when parents and other family members – the wider audience each of whom have different ideas about the plot - are present. In the physical co-present interview encounter moments away from the audience were rare, except when a participant leaves the room for instance. Otherwise a researcher's performance is viewed at all times either by the participants or by others in the vicinity. Furthermore, recent drives within the UK to archive the majority of research data for secondary analysis and re-use - as has been the case for the Your Space study since 2007 - might mean that both researchers and participants have an awareness of potential (future) audiences in their presentation of self, shaping their verbal and non-verbal performances during an interview.

The relationship between mediated forms of communication and rapport are therefore complex. Remote modes do not necessarily mean that rapport is more challenging to establish or maintain. 'Remoteness' shifts the encounter in such a way that the physical separation between researcher and participant can facilitate a greater (emotional) connection through participants' increased sense of ease with the setting and mode.

Involvement and shared frame

For Goffman, one of the assumptions underlying everyday interaction was 'involvement' or the predilection to be dis/engaged in an activity. As Manning (1992) professes '...euphoria and involvement occur when participants in an encounter display an appropriate level of engagement with and commitment to a social gathering' (p. 82). Potential impediments to involvement might include self-consciousness or interaction-consciousness or a pre-occupation with matter external to the encounter (Manning 1992). Goffman's notions of 'focused interaction' and 'shared frame' or the extent to which the interlocutors – the researcher and participant - come together with a common purpose in mind, shaping a shared experience and reciprocal exchanges are also useful for assessing the effects of shifting from physical co-present to remote interviewing. Goffman in his 1974 volume *Frame Analysis* explored how social experience is organised. According to Manning (1992) 'He believed that our observations are understandable only in terms of the frame we put around them' (p. 118).

Whilst in Goffman's terms 'involvement' concerns interaction in a specific encounter QLR work comprises a series of interactions over time. Your Space participants have a long-standing relationship with the project that has previously comprised physical co-present meetings. For many, the shift in interview mode did not appear to have altered the frame. Indeed, over time and as many went on to study in Higher and Further Education institutions, this strengthened further the focus of the frame. Feedback garnered at the end of the fourth interview highlighted motivations for continued

involvement that were founded on a personal (long-term) commitment and loyalty to the project and our relationship regardless of mode. A key impetus was a curiosity about their past accounts and a desire to record their stories for posterity, for continuity and for reflection as the following exemplars illustrate:

'... I was just telling my boyfriend that I can't believe you've actually been following me for so long and still following me and I think it's absolutely fantastic' (JazzyB).

'It's amazing though how things have kept up with you though. How are things with the project though? ... 'I just want to apologise. I know you've kept in contact so well and I haven't been as active' ... 'I really like that we've caught up like this [Skype] as well.... 'If ever you need anything else from me I'll be happy to take part even if it means having an interview while I'm in [overseas] I'd be happy to do that' (Daniel B).

'I've quite enjoyed it actually. It's nice to hear what was going on a few years ago' (Alannah).

Participant's concern for my own well-being was indicative of the strength of our relationship. Several echoed Deakin and Wakefield's (2014) observations about the advantages of remote interviewing on researcher well-being implying that travelling to visit the nationally distributed sample was in some way burdensome:

'It's probably easier for you ... you don't have to travel everywhere' (Daisy).

'I guess as well on the phone is definitely more convenient and for you especially because otherwise you have to travel' (Maya).

For many, the mode of 'catching up' was secondary to their commitment to the project. That said it may be that those who opted out of the fourth interview saw the shift in mode as disruptive to the relationship. Only six young people declined an interview, either overtly or through non-response, with the remainder uncontactable due to obsolete postal and email addresses and phone numbers.

What Your Space participants understand of the research encounter, how they regard the frame of the interaction shaped their assessments of the effects of the shift in interview mode. For instance, one young man, Carl, asserted an understanding of research as a process of 'information gathering':

'... it's [remote interviewing] slightly less personal I guess compared to the other interviews. Er but as a way of getting information it's just as good'.

A point similarly made by Ashley:

'...wouldn't have said that by you coming here or by face-to-face that my answers would be any different'.

Both young men identified aspects of the interaction they believed might be missing from the encounter but their focus on 'information' and 'answers' highlighted their epistemological position; the interview as a tool for 'information gathering'. Participants, therefore, have differing ideas about 'frame' and the purpose of the qualitative research endeavour, which shapes their evaluations of the implications of the shift in interview mode. If the perceived purpose is 'information gathering' then mediated forms of communication are equally legitimate.

Alisha's more detailed exemplar points to the interaction between deep understandings of 'frame', 'impression management' and the nature of the qualitative interview. Alisha, a middle-class, British Pakistani young woman, took part in an extended interview for the fourth wave and elected to participate by phone. She had previously been interviewed in her home in 2003 when she was 11 years-old, and in her mother's shop in 2007 and 2009, aged 16 and 18 respectively. Over time it became apparent that part of the rationale for Alisha's participation stemmed from her interest in and growing passion for Psychology and she moulded the project's purpose and approach fit with her thinking; an example of the manipulation of interaction. During 2013, age 22 she had just gained a first class honours degree in Psychology and was on the verge of applying to medical school to study Psychiatry. Her interest in Psychology was shaped by her mother's aspirations for her and she had, over the years, cited key texts that she had read and much of her narrative surrounding familial relationships and friendships was shaped by a psycho-analytic framework and she demonstrated a consistent couching of her own life in these terms. My knowledge of her interest and her background was implicated in my own performance as I felt under greater pressure to demonstrate competency and legitimacy as a researcher. Furthermore, as a result of several family crises Alisha's sister, and to a lesser extent herself had been in receipt of formal therapeutic care. This experience had also shaped the 'frame' of the encounter in the extent and way she described emotional areas of her life.

Looking back longitudinally Alisha made explicit her way of thinking. In wave 2 she said 'I know psychology so the problem is I psychoanalyse everything', whilst in wave 3 she stated 'I think with Psychology.' The shift to a remote mode of interviewing did not appear to re-shape the lens she applied to each interview significantly. There was slightly less of a psycho-analytic framing in the fourth interview. Nonetheless, her own studies and professional career further embedded her sense that we were in pursuit of similar goals. Over time we were more able to incorporate the specialist language of the research process into the natural flow of conversation, both making assumptions about the understanding of the other. During wave 3 for instance in talking about the project she said:

'And I think the way that you've done it using qualitative data rather than quantitative ... which is great because I think the questions that you ask me are so emotionally attached ... you couldn't put a figure on them ...'

In discussing the internships she had undertaken she spoke of writing academic papers and of concepts such as 'rapport' during the wave 4 interview:

'I contacted individuals and sent papers I had helped to write or I had written myself and things like that or essays and things and they would turn into a rapport that way'.

Towards the end of the interview she talked about her own experience of phone interviews:

‘I did a lot of these sorts of things for my dissertation ... so I’m quite used to phone interviews’.

‘Situational propriety’ or knowledge about how to behave in particular encounters and how this is determined by the context in which it occurs forms one of the assumptions underpinning everyday interaction that Goffman identified. This might include etiquette or sensitivity to posture or body language. The argument is that behaviour can only be understood with knowledge of the context in which it occurred (Manning 1992). In many respects Alisha was well-versed in the script that shapes the qualitative research and therapeutic care encounters. Her assumptions about the focus of our work and her experience of other research including telephone interviews – for her from a psychological perspective – shaped her performance and the way in which she took on the role of participant in each of the interviews as she sought not only to narrate her life experiences but to demonstrate understanding of them on an analytic level. Moreover, Alisha’s participation also had a more instrumental rationale manipulating aspects of the interaction for her own purpose. During wave 2 she requested information about the project for her University application form, and during wave 3 she sought opportunities for work experience in my institution. Our practical knowledge about how to behave in different encounters was, for Alisha, firmly fixed by what she saw as our shared frame and this did not alter with the shift in mode.

In considering notions of both ‘involvement’ and ‘shared frame’ it is also important to think about the conclusion of a connection and a participant’s withdrawal from the process. In QLR work some degree of attrition is evitable as participants move location and despite the best efforts of the researcher connections are lost. Withdrawal from a project, either temporary or permanent, might be considered more straight-forward for participants online (Deakin and Wakefield 2014). The process of withdrawal is perhaps less transparent, as the example from my field notes outlines:

‘Nikki seemed happy to take part in another interview and we provisionally arranged a date and time to conduct the interview. She said she’d text me if she could not make it. I was very optimistic as she accepted my request to be a Facebook ‘friend’. The day before the interview I sent her a reminder text, as I’d done for many of the other participants, stating that unless I heard otherwise I’d call her the following day at 5pm. I gave her the option to withdraw. Again, I didn’t hear from her and at 5pm she didn’t answer the phone. There was no option to leave a message. I tried again several times over the next hour or so. I then decided to send her a Facebook message as a last attempt to re-establish contact. When I logged on I discovered she rescinded her online friendship’ (Field notes).

As Manning (1992) notes potential impediments to involvement might include self-consciousness or interaction-consciousness, both of which could relate to the interview mode. This was the only instance of such a withdrawal from the project. The lack of physical proximity meant less personal accountability and/or social pressure on the part of (potential) participants. Nikki did not lose face by withdrawing from a remote

interview. In QLR work where research relationships are often long-term connections participants may feel more obliged to proceed when invited to do so in a physical co-present encounter. Meaningful opportunities for withdrawal - either from one aspect of a project or from the study in its entirety - need to be offered to participants to avoid potential coercion.

Expressions 'given off'

The lack of paralinguistic cues and non-verbal forms of communication are commonly considered to be amongst the most significant shortcomings of remote interviewing (Markham 2006). This is reinforced by Deakin and Wakefield (2014) who suggest that '...in the disembodied interview, all the subtle visual, non-verbal cues that can help to contextualise the interviewee in a face-to-face scenario are lost' (p. 605). Yet as Dorit Redlich-Amirav and Gina Higginbottom (2014) suggest, platforms such as Skype '...overcome the problems of losing visual and interpersonal aspects of the interaction' (p. 6, see also Evans, Elford and Wiggins 2008). In his 1955 work Goffman regarded 'face-work' as identity management or "... everything conveyed by an actor during a turn at taking action" with 'moves' constituting verbal and non-verbal face-to-face interaction. Furthermore in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* Goffman (1959) distinguishes between expressions 'given', usually the spoken word, and those 'given off'; non-verbal forms of communication such as gestures, facial expressions and body language that can be more revealing than what is actually said. They shape the impressions the interlocutors have of one another, and how what is said is interpreted (Gillham 2005, Rettie 2009, Barr 2013). In physical co-present interviews they are observed, and in video internet calls they may be partially observed depending on the positioning of the participants' webcam and their proximity to the screen. Licoppe and Morel's (2012) aforementioned dominance of the 'talking heads' orientation in internet video calls masks much of the opportunity to observe and react to the expressions 'given off' through body language.

In the Your Space study there was a distinct difference between the Skype-to-Skype video calls and the audio-only Skype-to-mobile/landline discussions, with the former being more closely aligned to the earlier physical co-present interviews in participants' homes. It was opportunities for observing and responding to expressions 'given off' - not permitted in audio-only or internet video calls where the visual element was not sustained by both parties for the duration of the interview - that was key.

Issues that are likely to have implications for data quality were also raised by some participants. In comparing their experiences of both physical co-present and remote interviews some felt that they either did not elaborate upon their responses to the same degree or that simply felt less focused in their thought processes in the remote interviews, as the following extracts illustrate:

'...it's nice if you can speak to someone face-to-face because you feel you can get your points across a lot better than over the phone' (Steven).

'Some of the questions that you asked I probably didn't give a direct answer and whittled on a little bit... but um I've had every opportunity to say what I wanted to say' (Ashley A).

'I probably ramble on a bit more when I'm not in front of someone because ... without someone standing in front of you you tend to ramble on a bit more to try and get your point across' (Michael).

Such comments generally came from those who opted to take part in a phone interview. As experienced research participants they demonstrated an understanding of 'shared frame'; that the conversation was for a specific purpose and that some of the constituent elements of interaction – to which physical co-present encounters are more conducive – might be essential to the analytic process.

Furthermore, the presence of the props of the encounter also shaped the interlocutor's ability to use non-verbal forms of communication. The holding of equipment that facilitated the mediated communication, for instance, restricted the movement of Danielle's hands:

'I probably use my hands slightly less because I'm holding my laptop and things'.

This example illustrates the interaction between what, in Goffman's terms might be seen as the 'props' of the encounter, elaborated upon later in the paper, of the different interview modes and their effects on the non-verbal elements of the interview.

The lack of opportunity to observe non-verbal communication was not seen by all participants as a disadvantage. Echoing Goffman's (1967) aforementioned ideas about physical co-present interaction and the risk of embarrassment some expressed a preference for audio-only communication arguing that they felt more comfortable not being able to observe my reactions to their responses:

'...because I can't see your facial expressions and ... so I feel like it's much easier speaking to you [face-to-face]...' (Lady Loud).

'No I think it might be easier [to talk] on the phone ... because I can't see your reaction [chuckles]' (Lizzie).

For participants there were then both advantages and disadvantages to observing expressions 'given off'. Lady Loud and Lizzie's concern did not relate to physical but visible co-presence which, for them, also ran the risk of embarrassment.

Focusing on the minutiae of interaction in an interview can heighten awareness of verbal subtleties attention to which can help compensate for a lack of (clear) visual connection. Listening for hushed tones proved invaluable in understanding subjects about which participants were reticent to discuss or demonstrated instances where they feared others might overhear the conversation. In return I often unconsciously used more muted tones in my attempts to demonstrate care in audio-only interviews. I was also aware of the pace of discussion as an indicator of engagement and disclosure and my attempts, again unconscious at the time, of voice-matching classed accents to re-establish a connection and foster rapport.

What is salient is that in mediated modes of communication the observation of non-verbal gestures is only partial, moulded not only by the reach of the webcam(s) and the

type of device used but also by the effect that the presence of such technologies has on the capacity to make such expressions.

Willingness to divulge

For Goffman 'accessibility' or what we permit others to know of ourselves constitutes one of the assumptions underlying everyday interaction. He argued that we generally afford access to friends and sanctioned strangers and that we constantly monitor encounters (Manning 1992). This concept, taken with his aforementioned work on 'involvement shields', is particularly apt for thinking through the implications of shifting from physical co-present to remote modes on issues of disclosure; that an alternative mode of communication shapes what and how much a participant is willing to divulge and the way in which they narrate their lives. Survey respondents stated that they all felt they got on with me just as well during the remote interview as they had done online and believed they were able to tell me as much about their life as they had during my home visits.

With almost half of the sample using a social networking site to stay in touch with the project Your Space participants might commonly, although problematically, be viewed as 'digital natives' and therefore well-versed in sharing parts or versions of their lives online. The ordinariness of mediated communication is likely to be implicated in their willingness to disclose the detail of their lives as the following extracts illuminate. Carl took part in a Skype interview, whilst Claire and Michael opted for Skype-to-mobile phone discussions:

'I don't think I have any qualms about saying stuff over the internet' (Carl).

'I didn't really notice any difference. I'm used to having to talk to people' (Claire).

'I talk to people the same way, regardless of whether they're on the phone or in front of me, if it's an email or a text ... I'll talk to people exactly the same and I'd be as open as I would be normally, so it hasn't made any difference to me to be honest' (Michael).

In reflecting on Goffman's work, Manning (1992) argues that '...talk is not only about the exchange of knowledge and the performance of acts; it is also a way of affirming relationships, and what organises these also organises talk....' (p. 93). Michael's comment in particular highlights how differences in interaction and especially between modes are taken-for-granted. It is nonetheless questionable whether participants would have afforded a new researcher, whom they had not previously met in person, the same level of accessibility.

Moreover, it was not necessarily the substantive focus of the disclosure that was salient but the way in which participants conveyed their lives that shifted between modes, with some believing that non-verbal gestures had analytic value. In this example Ashley A stated that the content of what he divulged over the phone and during a home visit would have had equivalence but that the interaction and as a consequence my analysis might be lacking in richness:

'I dunno like sometimes you might have got a bit more from like maybe my expressions ... obviously when you have a conversation over the phone like people's initial reactions you're never ever going to get as it's just the sound' (Ashley A).

Participants were asked about the suitability of different modes for either a short 'catch-up' discussion or for an in-depth biographical interview, akin to the detailed conversation facilitated during a home visit. In general the phone interviews were regarded as appropriate for 'catch up' discussions whilst some degree of visible co-presence, whether physical or remote, was seen as necessary for in-depth interactions. In line with this the internet video calls were on average 16 minutes longer for the catch-up interviews and 21 minutes longer for the extended interviews. Whilst this was, by no means, an indicator of engagement or willingness to divulge it did represent a substantial difference between modes. It seems that visible co-presence – in terms of home visits or online encounters - is key in determining the nature of the interaction.

An extended Skype interview conducted with Florence and Isobel provides a more detailed exemplar. The sisters are from a mixed ethnic and intermediate class background and live in a rural village in Central England. Over the course of the study they have prided themselves on providing rich accounts of their lives with their joint interviews totalling between 2 and 3 hours each in duration. The Skype discussion was no exception with the sisters discussing their lives for just over 2 hours. Difficulties with the connection towards the end of the interview and the loss of video did not impact upon what was divulged but the way it was expressed and some of the sisters' feelings towards the interview, as demonstrated in both my field notes and extracts from their interview:

'We managed to establish a good connection from the outset with clear video and audio. The sisters forewarned me that they had been having problems with their Skype connection of late, especially sustaining the video connection. It actually worked really well for the most part. It broke up for a short period of time on several occasions but resumed without intervention. Unfortunately the video and audio eventually froze about 1hour 20mins into the interview and we had to terminate the call. We tried to re-establish a connection but could only do so with the audio turned on. This was the situation for the remainder of the interview, which was a real shame as I felt it had an adverse effect on rapport. It did, however, really illustrate the significance of seeing one another (from my perspective anyway)' (wave 4 field notes).

ISOBEL: I don't know... I think it's slightly more easy to open up to someone when it's face-to-face but I think this has been a good alternative to, you know, doing a lot of travelling.

FLORENCE: But then again like I think we've been open enough, really.

ISOBEL: There's definitely not anything more we could have added but I'm just saying for some people it might be harder. For me personally I hate talking to people on the phone. I just ... I don't know what it is about it but especially if I don't know I just don't like doing it but having the... being able to see you it was a lot easier and there definitely is the second half

when the video cut out it was a bit ... it just felt weirder 'cos I'm just talking to your Skype picture.

ISOBEL: I think ... I dunno ... Online I think can seem a bit more helpful. I think we've accomplished ... I hope we've accomplished a lot today. I don't think anything more could be have been added by you coming over. I suppose you might get impressions ... 'cos I remember you took pictures of like our room and stuff.

FLORENCE: I don't think so.

ISOBEL: No, I don't think so 'cos me and Florence have a tendency to rant in these interviews anyway.

FLORENCE: I'm pretty sure you told me that we're the longest running ones or something ... correct me if I'm wrong but this interview has gone over what it's meant to be, hasn't it?

Being able to view the sisters aided my understanding of the power relations between them. In the previous physical co-present interviews Florence had proved the dominant of the two sisters; reinforced both in the narrative and non-verbal communication. During the first part of the Skype interview it was, again interesting to view the dynamic between the sisters. They sat almost side-by-side with Florence in the foreground, again tending to dominate the conversation. I did feel that Isobel was a little more assertive and self-assured this time. But Florence took the pole position ahead of her sister and closest to the screen. Without the video element I would have had to rely on their narrative alone. As Paul Hanna (2012) stated 'It is through this additional visual element offered by Skype (and alternative 'Webchat' software) that the interview can remain, to a certain extent at least, a 'face-to-face' experience' (p. 214).

What participants understand of the encounter may differ between modes. The internet video and phone calls were experienced by many as less formal and, even if made explicit, the operation and presence of the recording equipment was not so apparent. One danger is that some may divulge more than they would have done in a physical co-present encounter. Jean Duncombe and Julie Jessop (2012) talk of the dangers of 'faking friendship' in relation to the commodification of researchers' skills of 'doing rapport' to encourage disclosure. This they contrast to the "ideal feminist research relationship' where spontaneous and genuine rapport supposedly leads more naturally to reciprocal mutual disclosure' (p. 120) suggesting that most research fits somewhere along the spectrum. Ruth Patrick (2012) also argues with reference to QLR work that 'With repeated research interactions, it is inevitable that the level of personal involvement between researcher and participant will increase and this must be carefully managed such that some professional boundaries are maintained while allowing opportunities for researcher disclosure and reciprocal offers of help and assistance to flow from researcher to participant' (p. 3). Indeed, the temporal nature of QLR muddies the waters somewhat and whilst connections may not be intentionally 'faked' the very particular nature of the QLR research 'friendship' needs to be acknowledged. As such research 'friendships' (generally) blossom over time participants may be more willing or open in what they disclose. In these terms the boundaries between researcher-participant and intermittent research friend become more blurred. Remote modes perhaps then have the potential to downplay the interaction as a research encounter. Your Space participant Daniel B was likely to be less aware of me glancing at the interview schedule

and certainly of operating the recording equipment (see also Deakin and Wakefield 2014); a point on which he commented when reflecting on the previous interview:

‘... you’re so used to using Skype with your friends so it’s just like I’m talking to a friend at the moment ... I use it constantly with talking to friends from abroad so it’s no different when I’m talking to you’.

In these terms such remote modes using mediated forms of communication may encourage participants to divulge more than they would have been willing to do in a physically co-present interview.

One of the ethical challenges for QLR work is the negotiation of the research relationship over time. There is an inherent danger that with the regularity of contact the ‘frame’ and focus of the interaction is lost. Mediated modes of interviewing might further mask the purpose of both the conversation and the relationship.

Disclosure of sensitive issues

In QLR work that often uses biographical approaches to interviewing the disclosure of sensitive or distressing experiences cannot always be anticipated. When it came to discussing emotional or traumatic experiences such as homelessness, bereavement or illness, remote modes, especially audio-only interviews, seemed inadequate in that they lacked the opportunity to demonstrate the ethic of care that has framed our approach to the Your Space project in a meaningful manner (see also Seitz 2015). Participants were unable to see my facial expressions of empathy, sympathy or kindness. That said the physical distance between researcher and participant might make some feel more at ease discussing difficult issues (Deakin and Wakefield 2014, Edwards and Holland 2013). For some the absence of other people, particularly family members that mediated communication afforded may have even aided disclosure and participants’ ease at sharing such accounts.

For Seitz (2015) ‘Skype may be characterized as ‘presenting an emotional barrier’ (p. 4). In contrast to her reflections in the few cases where particularly harrowing accounts were discussed Your Space participants did not appear to have disclosed their experiences in any less detail than they did in the past. This may be a reflection of our long-standing research relationship. Alisha, discussed earlier in this paper, is a prime example of this. Looking back longitudinally much of her narrative across the interviews focused on very detailed accounts of the traumas her family had faced and some of the problems her friends had encountered; the substantive focus of which was consistent albeit updated over time. At times I felt I was intruding into very personal matters but Alisha offered many things freely. In detailing her relationship with her sister and the impact of her sister’s illnesses on their connection she was equally as lucid across the interviews as the following two extracts from the wave 3 and 4 interviews highlight:

SUSIE: She was doing Biomedicine the last time I spoke to you.

ALISHA: Yeah she was. She's still doing it. She wants to go to Medical School ... do a transfer course but ... at the moment she's finding it very difficult to continue because ... well she lost nine or ten stone in a year [sic]..

SUSIE: Oh wow.

ALISHA: She didn't go completely underweight but she was quite underweight and she was obviously compensating for trying to maintain her weight in different ways and then she became quite unhealthy mentally ... she wasn't admitted [to Hospital] ... they wanted to admit her but my Mum spoke to them and they said ...'She's twenty-two and she isn't being admitted into a hospital with eating disorders and other mental health problems' ... it's actually more unhealthy being around ... if you have a relatively healthy mentality in some ways [then] being around people who have such problems it sort of feed into you

SUSIE: Yeah

ALISHA: ...and so he said it would be better if she just went to Therapy and eating disorder clinics. So she is trying really hard at the moment and she is actually at an appointment at the moment and she's going to ... so she's working her way up after she hit rock bottom so ... yeah.

SUSIE: So she comes and stays with you every few days?

ALISHA: Yeah.

(wave 3, mother's shop)

SUSIE: Okay now you told me a lot about the difficult situation your sister was in and the support that you were providing for her in light of her eating disorder and sort of related illnesses and I just wondered what your relationship with your sister has been like over the last four years.

ALISHA: Umm I'd say it has deteriorated to some extent.

SUSIE: Uh huh.

ALISHA: She should be still at university attempting to do her degree. She did Biomedicine and she did her second year of Biomedicine and didn't finish that and then her third year ... she did her second year I think two or three times

SUSIE: Mmm.

ALISHA: And she didn't finish that and then she met her partner at University...

SUSIE: Ah OK.

ALISHA: And they've been together a few years and then she was quite ... she ran away for about a year and didn't come back and this and that happened and then she developed ... her eating disorder got a lot worse so she was Sectioned

..

SUSIE: Oh dear.

ALISHA: ... she was in an eating Disorder unit for a few months, she should have been in there for much longer but this was three or four months before her wedding, so she was allowed out the day before her wedding. She got married and then she was meant to go back in but she refused to and then she moved to Leeds for a little while ... obviously she was about 35 kilosbut she put on weight through I think more bulimia than sort of healthy eating. So she had put on enough weight and she got pregnant and so she had my niece, she is now 15 months

SUSIE: Oh.

ALISHA: But <niece> was born at 29 weeks and she was very, very, very poorly.

SUSIE: Oh gosh.

ALISHA: She was in an intensive care unit for quite a long time

SUSIE: Oh dear.

And so the conversation continued ... (wave 4, phone)

The shift in mode does not appear to be implicated in her willingness to divulge such personal issues. What is significant is the frequency with which I interject (every 48 words for the remote discussion and every 78 words for the physical co-present interview). In the wave 4 interview to compensate for the lack of non-verbal communication I found myself making discrete interjections (as underlined in the above extracts) to try to convey a sense of care but these often felt superficial or even artificial. Phrases such 'Uh huh', 'oh dear' were used to demonstrate my engagement and to allude to my sense of sympathy; a conscious course of action that had not been required in the physical co-present interviews as I was able to express this through body language. As noted earlier, for Goffman (1959) expressions 'given off' often expose more than what is actually said. Whilst I experienced some feelings of inadequacy and helplessness across all of Alisha's interviews on hearing these accounts the audio-only discussion felt wholly unsatisfactory. In interactional terms there were key differences in my responses and the way in which I attempted to demonstrate care with a lack of visible co-presence. My intermissions were substitutes for the lack of non-verbal communication and ultimately disrupted Alisha's flow more frequently than had been the case in previous physical co-present encounters.

There were clear instances when, in Goffman's (1963) terms, despite generally giving candid examples, Alisha erected an 'involvement shield'. Commonalities across her interviews included her guardedness around her interests and hopes for the future, her own health and one key relationship. As an example the shield around her interests was illustrative of the tension between her mother's own expectations for her that did not allow her to pursue her passion for the arts as a legitimate career. These involvement shields were manifest in uncharacteristically curt responses including 'yes' or 'no', obviously intended to shut down the conversation. Examples included:

SW: And I remember you saying last time your mother was quite hopeful you'd either go into Law or Medical school...

ALISHA: Yes ... (Wave 4).

SW: ... you were always very interested in poetry; is that something you've continued?

AS: Yes (Wave 3).

'I write a lot of poetry and just in general and I do a lot of Drama so they are my main interests' (Wave 2).

The silences and lack of narrative were revealing of the sub-plot to her interviews and again, there was general consistency across the different modes.

When the approach to a QLR study is framed by an ethic of care that seeks to nurture and respect relationships over time then the discussion of distressing and sensitive issues using a medium that does not permit visible co-presence and the use of non-verbal forms of communication seems inappropriate. It is, however, not easy to gauge if or when a participant might wish to illustrate their responses with such stories. That said, despite researcher misgivings feedback from participants did not indicate significant concerns about the appropriateness of remote interviewing and, again, the

less pressurised encounter fostered through mediated communication may be more conducive for such disclosure. What does appear to be salient is the way in which researcher attempts to articulate non-verbal communication through interjections alters interaction within the interview.

Breaking rules and remedial interchanges

Deakin and Wakefield (2014) argue that facets such as pauses or repetitions are not markedly different in physical co-present and online interviews. Yet, little work has taken a nuanced approach to exploring interactional differences. In *'Relations in Public'* Goffman (1971) refers to 'breaking rules' and 'remedial interchanges' which can be drawn upon to consider whether different modes encourage/mitigate disruptions to the interview order that break the frame (e.g. researcher asks/participant answers) and repair work (e.g. apologies). In mediated communication a sustained audio and preferably video connection is essential for mitigating disruptions and interruptions in the flow of conversation. Otherwise, much energy is consumed by both interlocutors in listening diligently.

In considering the implications of disruptions to the interaction order drawing on the example of Your Space participant Misha is insightful. Misha is a British Asian young woman from a socially mobile background who took part in an extended phone discussion for her fourth interview. Each of the previous encounters had taken place in her home in North London. In the phone interview we experienced poor quality audio from the outset and a delay to the start of the interview due to a fire evacuation in my office. On establishing a connection I asked Misha to confirm whether she was happy to take part. Reflecting on my field notes highlights the disruptions we experienced:

'The first line of questioning opened and Misha had to ask me to repeat what I was saying as she temporally lost mobile phone reception. The pause and what I was doing was documented. I let out a 'tut' followed by very practical response; the frantic tapping of keyboard as I tried to reset and redial. It was obvious that I was frustrated and impatient not with Misha but the technology. I can detect frustration and impatience in my tone of voice but (hopefully) an outward presentation of a calm but determined self. We reconnected and I donned the mask of a 'professional researcher'; or at least my perception of one, putting aside my irritations when my audience came into 'view'.

I had felt apologetic and perhaps a little incompetent even though the issues were out of my control. She responded with 'these things happen' and blamed her own mobile phone. Throughout the interview the audio-quality impeded interaction despite our best efforts to improve the situation. We frequently had to ask one another to clarify what had been said or to apologise. As an exemplar, Misha said quite tersely:

'Okay ... you'll have to repeat that as we lost reception halfway'.

This resonates to some degree with Kathryn Roulston's (2014) article on interactional problems in research interviews. Her work has shown 'how keenly interviewers and interviewees monitor one another's talk—continually orienting to what came before in efforts to understand one another, and demonstrating turn-by-turn orientation to the categories employed and the sequential work of asking and answering questions for the

purposes of doing research interviews' (p. 289). For Misha the technical issues we faced rather than the shift in mode meant that she felt she was unable to concentrate on thinking through her responses but rather focused on making sure she had captured the essence of the question:

'To be honest Susie I think I'm comfortable both ways [modes] equally and it's not a problem but obviously because there was such a bad connection ... and that's all it was, I was more concentrating on listening to what you were saying rather than thinking about my answers ... It was maybe a little bit distracting but otherwise I had no problems with it at all, no'.

Unlike some of the other participants she believed that had she participated in another physical co-present interview she would have divulged more detail about her life and attributed her reticence to the technical issues, which resulted from the false start to the interview, the truncation of some parts of the conversation and a greater propensity to talk over one another; hindrances to interaction we did not encounter in the previous physical co-present interviews. She said:

'I think maybe in person I probably would have extended a bit more'.

This has obvious implications for data quality and demonstrates how the interview mode shapes the resultant conversation.

For Misha then it was not the case that physical co-presence risked embarrassment, in Goffman (1967) terms, but rather would have enabled more detailed offering of her life experiences. The lack of visible co-presence encouraged disruptions that essentially broke the frame. The propensity to interrupt one another was far greater in the audio-only interviews. Challenges centred on our ability to judge when the other had finished speaking. This was partly determined by technology and the audibility of Skype-to-mobile calls, where in a number of cases the audio was hindered by an echo or participants experienced intermittent reception. To apologise during a phone interview would have disrupted the participant again as it would have involved a verbal apology rather than a gesture that would encourage continuation.

Speech is interpreted visually as well as audibly, so seeing a participant speak aids understanding. Philippa Barr (2013) points to the potential for misinterpretation when communication is mediated by technology (see also Seitz 2015). She also argues that 'Anything that disrupts our ordinary speech rhythms, as well as the way we process tone of voice, facial expression and other physiological cues, can affect interpretation of the speech act and transform meaning' (Webpage). If the interview is audio-only or the video patchy then the interview lacks the richness that comes from non-verbal communication (see also Saumure and Given n.d.). Misha's most recent interview was a definite example of an unreliable mode that altered the interaction order and was detrimental to rapport, disclosure and, therefore data quality. Akin to the previous interviews we also experienced interruptions from family members. These disturbances did not appear to affect the flow of conversation to the same degree. The key issue is the unpredictability of some of the technologies. The danger for QLR research is that a poor experience of an interview mode new to the study could have implications for the likelihood of future engagement.

Supportive interchanges

In his 1981 work *Forms of Talk* Goffman argued that everyday talk was perfunctory; that conversations both formal and informal comprised 'identifiable procedures for completing various interactional tasks However trivial this game appears to be, it structures our view of the social world, and we spend our lives playing it' (Manning 1992: 14). In the Your Space study examining 'supportive interchanges' - or interpersonal rituals such as 'greetings' or 'leavings' - permitted the illumination of differences in interaction across the modes. This aspect of the analysis might be seen to direct attention to the mundane or trivial, even be regarded as a distraction or aside from the stuff that is the substantive focus of the research. In QLR work such interactions are vital in scaffolding the long-term research relationship. Initial impressions and the building of rapport, along with the (albeit temporary for QLR) exit from an interview has a bearing on participant's perceptions of their worth and of the researcher's general interest in their lives. It is only in focusing on the finer detail of the interview that the significance of differences between greetings and leavings in physical co-present and remote modes become apparent.

Much work occurs prior to the commencement of any interview not least an internet video or phone call. Licoppe and Morel (2012), in their work on mediated communication, talk of pre-openings that '... provide an occasion for participants to rearrange their body and thus to display a) how they orient with respect to the spatial frame of the shot, perceivable through the control image; and b) their expectations regarding how they should appear properly' (p. 405). The aim of this is to achieve a position enabling the other interlocutor to view a close-up facial image in what they describe as a 'talking heads' orientation. They suggest that 'talking heads' is the default orientation for 'openings' and that even if the camera is moved to allow the viewing of an object or environment the camera lens is usually returned to this orientation to create a sense of intimacy. This was certainly the case for the majority of the Your Space Skype interviews.

In the internet video calls greetings were, at times, truncated as the interview encounter with Felix highlights. Felix, is a White, middle-class, young man, who took part an extended Skype interview for the fourth wave of discussions. All previous interviews had been conducted in his home in an increasingly affluent area of North London. As in many of the other internet video calls when a connection is established there are often some hesitant exchanges as the audio and video clarity are checked. Felix and I established an audio connection with relative ease but there was a momentary delay in the video meaning that our initial greeting was without facial expression or body language. I then sought clarification of the connection quality, instead of continuing with the exchange of pleasantries:

SUSIE: Hello! [Picture appears after 4 seconds]. How are you?

FELIX: I'm good thanks.

SUSIE: Can you see and hear me okay?

FELIX: I can ... yes. It's fine.

The detail of the greetings and leavings during the physical co-present interviews are largely unrecorded digitally as they occurred prior to the commencement of the

interview. Reflection documented in field notes did log in relative detail the nature of pleasantries, small talk, and the exchange of hospitality. These notes served to highlight their absence during the remote interviews. Rather, the initial focus in the internet video calls was on ensuring a good quality video connection, and in phone interviews auditory clarity. Returning to the introductory sections of the interview with Felix what was also apparent was the way in which I focused on pursuing the purpose of the interview, rather than continuing with small talk; interaction in which I would have engaged whilst setting up equipment or receiving refreshment in a participant's home:

SUSIE: Excellent ... thanks ever so much for agreeing to take part in another interview today. Are you happy for me to record the interview?

FELIX: Yeah, yeah that's fine ...

SUSIE: I'm doing an audio recording but I've also got some software that records the video as well and I'll talk to you a bit more about that at the end about what I might do with that. [Felix nods] ... I'll just start with a little introduction to the interview. So, today, I'd really like to hear about what has changed and what has stayed the same in your life since we spoke four years ago and I'll be asking similar questions to last time, so for example your plans for the future. You don't have to answer all the questions, just say if you DON'T want to, there's no right or wrong answers I'm just interested in what you have to say [Felix nods] and if you want to stop the interview or you'd rather not take part in the project anymore that's fine too, just let me know and so ... I'm going to record it, as I mentioned already, and you may remember we have always protected your privacy in this project, so I've never used your real name, any of your family member names, any friends' names ... anything like that in Reports and you've always been known as Felix [smiles] throughout the duration of the Project ... I don't know if you remember that?

FELIX: I think I do, yeah [leans towards camera and smiles ... with a confidence and rapport] ...

My prologue continued for another few minutes whilst I covered issues of importance such as consent. On reflection, whilst Felix demonstrated ease and rapport, my focus seemed stilted; not akin to a more 'natural' flow of conversation. It was, at times, hard to do justice to the introductory section of the interview as many in pursuit of a more natural conversation seemed impatient to tell me about their lives. In some of the interviews this aspect felt amplified by the remote nature of the interviews and indeed, as Deakin and Wakefield (2014), remark that interview prologue whilst necessary was not always conducive to fostering rapport.

At the end on departing I started to become attuned to the distinctive nature and subtleties of the interaction in the remote interviews, particularly internet video calls. Towards the end of my Skype discussion with Felix his girlfriend made an appearance. She stood in the doorway at the back of the room with her arms folded but within the frame of the camera. She did not impose on the interview but Felix sensed her presence and turned to acknowledge her. He said 'Hi!' to her and in turning his head back towards the screen introduced her as his girlfriend pointing backwards casually with his thumb. We waved at one another; a gesture instigated by me and then she left the room. The interview continued.

Skype 'leavings', more so than phone 'leavings', were often protracted as it was not always easy to gauge the appropriate moment to say the final farewell and to press the red button to terminate the call; an action that either party can make. In physical co-present interviews 'leavings' can also be drawn out with discussion and hospitality continuing with the participant or other members of the household after the recording has ceased. Nonetheless, the action of leaving is generally directed by the researcher. As I began to realise the multitude of differences between supportive interchanges in the physical co-present remote interviews the universal 'Skype wave' stopped escaping my notice. It was not an expression of closure that I would have used on exiting a participant's home but it was something which we exchanged in many of the internet video calls. A wave commands to be reciprocated; otherwise it may be deemed as a snub. In some of the phone interviews I noticed a difference in tone with my voice reaching a crescendo as I tried to achieve closure with the participant's voice fading. In many of the interviews my final remarks often included a sense of optimism that the project would continue into the future and in response many wished me success or asked me a variety of questions about the study. Until reflecting on this process I engaged in such interactions 'on autopilot', overlooking, in Goffman's terms (1956), the abiding by sets of 'rules' that shape the way we do things.

Analysing seemingly trivial supportive interchanges was illuminating especially the taken-for-granted conventions around them, and how the introduction of a technology to facilitate such interaction can shift the emphasis or introduce new facets. Drawing on the work of Goffman elucidates such interactions; that do not form the focus of the interview, yet encase the encounter. They are vital to the establishment and maintenance of rapport and, of salience to QLR work, the research relationship.

Settings

In framing my analysis I have been particularly interested in the salience of 'settings' across physical co-present and remote modes. Over the course of the study I have gained much from wandering around the areas in which participants live, absorbing myself in the scenery of their homes, experiencing customs and hospitality, and meeting family and friends. The valuable contextual material that enriched my understanding of participants' lives was missing from the interviews recorded remotely (see also Deakin and Wakefield 2014). This has implications not only for my understanding of context but also rapport. There is an interrelationship between rapport and setting articulated through participants' assumptions about (a shared) understanding of the broader spatial context in which their lives were located. Your Space participant DJ Kizzel, a White, working-class young man, took part in an extended discussion by mobile phone for our fourth wave of interviews. The previous interviews had been conducted in his home during which he had expected and assumed that I would know something of his local area – a disadvantaged neighbourhood on the outskirts of a city in South West England - when narrating his life. My, albeit sketchy, knowledge undoubtedly helped to re-establish and reaffirm rapport. The following extracts from wave 2 allude to this, although the presentation of his words in written form does not convey the way DJ Kizzel gesticulates to indicate the location of different places. I have underlined where this occurred:

DJ: I sometimes go to ... basically stand in the street and go to the shops and go next door.

SW: Okay, the friend next door, in this street here ... in this bit ... and down to the local shops.

DJ: Yeah..... Also I will go down to the woods

Viewing the spatial context of participants' lives ultimately shaped what I asked of them. The most recent interview with DJ Kizzel was, however, conducted by phone. He was located in his grandmother's house, but had just moved into a hostel for homeless young people about 20 miles from his previous home. I had no sense of the area or the new context to his life. Remote modes did not permit engagement with the locale; their street, neighbourhood or school for instance and whilst I often found myself (re)visualising their homes and settings during the remote interviews many had moved away to university, to live independently or for work. A sense of their new setting could not be ascertained using remote modes. Instead my understanding was shaped by the reach of the webcam and this was dependent on how they positioned the lens and the device used (Licoppe and Morel 2012). That said interviews conducted using video calls did offer me some insights into spaces within the home that I might not have otherwise seen. Participants gained glimpses of my workplace and observing me in the very formal setting of a meeting room with a large board-room style table; not the impression I wished to offer participants in terms of both fostering rapport and helping to mitigate inequalities in power relations between us. The configuration of the technological infrastructure in my work place – fixed high on a wall - did not permit the intimacy of the aforementioned 'talking heads' orientation (Licoppe and Morel 2012).

Akin to earlier discussions about the pressure of presence, space was implicated in the participants' sense of ease during the encounter. Authors such as Hanna (2012), Redlich-Amirav and Higginbottom (2014) and Seitz (2015) talk of the comfort of being in one's own space, a point echoed by Your Space participant Carl:

'You get to sit in the comfort of your own home. It's not like its demanding'.

This sense of ease is echoed in Hanna's (2012) work in which he argues that '... both the researcher and the researched are able to remain in a 'safe location' without imposing on each other's personal space' (p. 241, see also Seitz 2015). Similarly, feedback from participants suggested some liked the idea that remote modes did not tie the encounter to a specific place:

'... it's useful because it means obviously I don't have to be at home' (Holly).

'It was convenient as house didn't have to be tidy' (Anon, survey response).

Importantly, in assessing the implications of shifting from physical co-present to remote issues what seemed to matter was visible co-presence or the feeling of co-presence rather than being physically situated in the same place. With good quality video and where the participant feels comfortable and at ease these circumstances result in facsimile. Your Space participant Anne for instance described her experience of a Skype interview as:

'... pretty much like you sitting in the kitchen with me [laughs] ... it's been nice, I like it'.

For some it is, therefore, a sense of co-presence that transcends the actual physical locations of researcher and participant to a more emotional connection that is salient.

Following Goffman, it is possible to consider both 'front' and 'back' stages in the interview encounter. In some physical co-present interviews the presence and contributions of family members felt like all interaction melded onto one stage, with indistinct boundaries. Remote modes, however, differ. Ruth Rettie (2009) argued that a phone conversation may have one visual front stage but more than one audio front stage depending on who is present (see also Gergen 2002). I was also – and especially for audio-only interviews – less aware of 'backstage' interactions, the presence of 'hidden' audiences, the level of privacy afforded by others, and whether participants felt able to talk or pressured to give a particular impression by the presence of others (Rettie 2009). In this respect there is a critical interaction between the interview mode and the space(s) in which it occurs. The shift in mode afforded some more privacy enabling them to locate themselves within a more secluded space within the family home such as their bedroom, whereas a home visit would most likely have taken place in a (potentially more public) communal space. For example, in all of her physical co-present interviews Your Space participant Daisy, a White middle-class young woman from rural Wales, was continuously interrupted by her father. By the fourth interview she had left home and was temporarily living with a relative whilst searching for her own rental accommodation. We did not experience such disruptions and were able to talk at ease for the duration of the interview using a Skype-to-mobile call. She commented:

'Yes, it's been easier to talk over the phone than face-to-face I think'.

The failure of one technology and the resultant need to shift to an alternative technology, mainly a fixed landline phone, meant that some interviews were conducted in more public spaces within participants' homes than they would have preferred. I conducted the majority of the interviews in our research centre meeting room that was equipped with basic teleconferencing equipment. The room was situated at the back of the building off of a secluded corridor and for the much part offered a private and quiet space. On a small number of occasions I did experience interruptions from neighbouring offices and was sometimes concerned that the conversation, due to the volume of our voices, could be heard by colleagues, in the adjacent room.

This critical interaction between mode and space is also shaped by the other occurrences within that space. The overhearing or even fear of eavesdropping caused concern, especially as Malaky pointed out, hushed tones are not always so easily captured in remote modes necessitating the need to raise one's voice which runs the risk of being overheard, a point reiterated by Holly:

'... as long as there was nobody listening ... at the other end of the phone [laughter]'.

This was also of concern to Maya who felt she would be afforded more privacy and the conversation subject to less disruption had I visited her home:

‘when you’re in the house I think having a longer conversation is easier because, you know, other people already know you’re having an interview and everything. I was worried my Mum was going to be calling me downstairs all the time when I was on the phone’.

In wave 4 a small minority of participants took part in a remote interview in a noticeably public place. Richard elected to be interviewed via Skype in his local sports club and experienced interruptions on several occasions. Sam opted to be interviewed by phone in the pub. Others were walking between venues. It is likely that the life circumstances of participants shaped these encounters rather than the interview mode, except that the mobile nature of the technologies used enabled many to continue with aspects of their day-to-day lives and participate in an interview. Reflecting back to comments made by participants earlier in the paper video telephony and phone interviews can render the encounter more mobile and transient.

The critical interaction, therefore, lies between the setting, the interaction that is permitted in that setting and the propensity for disruption, which could result in shifts in impression management that, particularly with an audio-only interview, go unnoticed or are impossible to ascertain by the researcher.

From artefacts to props

Drawing on Goffman’s (1956) dramaturgical approach I have been interested in the ‘props’ used to sustain interaction in the different interview modes. In many respects artefacts of the research encounter or those used within the interview setting are often taken-for-granted. Props can be employed by the researcher, participants or others present to help sustain focus, hold or reaffirm the frame. I consider there to have been two classifications of prop used across the interviews. One set comprised the formal props of the interview such as information leaflets and consent forms, hard copies of the interview schedules and notes, recording equipment and the activities incorporated into the discussion during waves 1 to 3. In framing my analysis using Goffman’s conceptual tools I have been able to focus on the seemingly banal. Some participants noted the momentous moment when I switched on the recording equipment during a home visit:

‘I still remember when you switched on the recording as well and I was like, ‘Oh its official!’ [laughter]’ (Daniel B).

‘I guess it makes a difference as well when you don’t see the equipment being set up in front of you, which gives the impression in the end that you’re just having a normal conversation with the person interviewing you’ (Anon, survey).

This also makes reference to the aforementioned ‘pressure of presence’ noted by participants.

Similarly the activities used in the earlier interviews, circle maps, timelines, vignettes, photography (see Weller and Edwards, with Stephenson 2011 for further details), seemed to continuously reaffirm the frame, reminding participants that this was an interview encounter for the purposes of research, rather than a catch-up with an old

friend or acquaintance. These props were lacking in the remote interviews and their absence was noted by several including sisters Florence and Isobel:

FLORENCE: I think it [circle map activity] does help you visualise things a bit, you know, 'cos you don't really think of these things really ...

ISOBEL: You're friends with your friends but then trying to sort them out into who you feel more friendly with is a lot easier when you can visually like have sections to put them in.

A point similarly expressed by Isobel at the end of her (physical co-present) wave 3 interview:

Yeah [activities are useful] because you never really think about it before. Who is your better friends and who you feel more closer to because, at the moment, they're just yer friends and when you put them in things like this you see who you feel more closer to and that so ...

It was not the shift in mode that was salient per se but the re-shaping of the content of the interview from 'talk and activities' to 'just talk' that was significant. Feedback garnered during the wave 3 interview had suggested that activities such as the circle map, a simple means of visualising emotional proximity to family and friends, had helped many to think about their relationships in ways they had not done before. The omission of activities that have formed an integral part of all previous interviews may have implications for data quality as participants have become used to using them as tools to aid the construction of their responses. In these terms it is the forms of communication that the interview mode permits that are important.

Participants also offered a range of informal props. During my home visits, everyday artefacts helped some to narrate their stories, even though they had not necessarily been invited to share them. Mobile phones or other such devices featured as part of stories about friendships, whilst examples of school-work said much about self-confidence. They acted as aide memories, tangible signifiers of life events, or props I used to help focus the mind on the interview or, to sustain the conversation. Whilst I was still able to observe such items online, they were rarely offered and I was unable to interact with them. DJ Kizzel, drawn upon earlier in this paper, was one participant for whom everyday artefacts were used as props to help narrative his life. Their interrelationship with setting was significant. He participated in three interviews in his parental home, whilst the fourth (phone) interview took place in his grandmother's home, although he was residing in a hostel for homeless young people.

In the earlier physical co-present interviews artefacts were drawn upon in an impromptu 'show and tell' fashion, often before the recording commenced or after the interview was complete. For instance, during the wave 2 interview, when he was 12 years-old, his proud display of computer games said much about his interests, material status and connection to his father. In this extract he exuded a sense of pride:

DJ: I like PlayStation games. As you can see ... all my PlayStation ...

SUSIE: Oh they're all your PlayStation games? So is that something you would do with your brother and your sister?

DJ: I play that with my dad really.

Similarly during wave 3 he asked permission to leave the interview momentarily to retrieve a prize possession:

DJ: Can I quickly show you a picture that I done in photography?

SUSIE: Yeah. [DJ goes off to locate his camera]

A little later...

SUSIE: Shall I tell you who you talked about last time?

DJ: Well my friend [name], I got a picture of him on my camera cos he does photography with me, do you want to see a picture of him?

SUSIE: Okay.

DJ: In photography we get a picture of each other ...

SUSIE: So are you doing photography for one of your GCSEs then?

DJ: Yeah.

DJ Kizzel broke from the interview briefly to get his camera to show me some of the photographs he had taken for his GCSE. On his return he proudly displayed the images he had recently captured. His concentration then waned as he became distracted by the sideshow of his siblings' actions, and then became quieter and more focused again especially when talking about photography. The real salience of the presentation of this prop was that DJ Kizzel had been given the camera in order to undertake a GCSE in photography. Looking back diachronically it was apparent that he had faced many challenges at school. Showing me his camera and photographs said much about his sense of pride in his educational achievement. I was able to observe the computer games close up and hold the camera whilst he scrolled the photographs showing each of them to me. Moreover, in both instances the props spoke much about the value he placed on these material possessions given his apparent lack of toys and other gadgets. As well as symbolic value such artefacts can also signify the acceptance of a researcher. In his work *'Relations in Public'* Goffman (1971) talks of 'possessional territory' or a space in which an individual lays out objects to mark territory. By bringing objects to me and demonstrating their significance in his life I felt that DJ Kizzel was inviting me into his territory.

The fourth interview lacked the richness that the experience of artefacts brought with remoteness not offering opportunities to observe and engage with objects or props. One example of my awareness of the use of artefacts during this interview proved to be a distraction rather than an aid. About a third of the way through the interview his mother arrived and as soon as she did so he pursued her for a cigarette.

DJ: Oh my Mum's just come back

[continues with narrative for a few minutes]

DJ: Oh two seconds sorry ... two secs...

Mum: ... Susie Weller [heard faintly in the background]

SUSIE: Hi

DJ: Oh up sorry... Uh yeah ... sorry about that I'm still waiting for a ciggie...

SW: OK. Do you feel you've had choice and opportunities in your life to do different things?

DJ: Yeah... Mum, can I have a fag please?

MUM: No!

DJ: I haven't got tobacco.

MUM: For god's sake...

DJ: Thank you. Sorry. Sorted. Sorry what was that you were saying?

This is not to say that we did not experience many disruptions in the earlier interviews, especially from his siblings but that the only evidence of an object in the interview detracted the focus. For that moment my remoteness or sense of being 'in the dark' from DJ Kizzel became all too apparent and I was shut out of the focus of the conversation in a way that I had not experienced in earlier interviews where artefacts were shared with me and used as part of the interview interaction.

Further, remote modes enable the possibility of a participant engaging in other activities and using props of which the other is not necessarily aware. Rettie (2009) points to 'parallel back stages' and the 'polyfocality of multitasking' in relation to mobile phone interviews. In the internet video calls in particular I was aware of participants engaging in sideshow activities such as receiving message notifications on their computers or mobile devices, making coffee, eating lunch/dinner and shuffling papers. This is not to say that participants do not engage in other activities or conversations whilst taking part in a physically co-present interview but that a researcher may not be fully aware of them when using remote modes.

In physical co-present interviews participants could present objects, often spontaneously, to help narrate their lives. Such 'props' helped sustain focus, and acted as aide memories, or tangible signifiers of life events. Whilst it was possible to observe such items online, they were rarely offered and the researcher could not interact with them.

The value of an audio-visual analytic lens

In assessing the differences between interview modes I have been working with comparable audio recordings of the spoken word exploring them diachronically for each participant. For those who participated in internet video calls, however, the possibility of capturing video footage of the interaction between researcher and participant was made feasible by software such as 'Pamela for Skype'. As Deakin and Wakefield (2014) highlight participants may have reservations about anonymity as a video recording captures much more of their physical identity than the audio recording common to most qualitative interviews. Survey responses from Your Space participants suggested that those who elected to take part in a video telephony interview were happy for the audio and visual elements to be recorded. Having this video material offers an additional or alternative lens on the analytic process that has been absent from previous waves of Your Space data (Jewitt 2012) where recollections of the interview encounter and those documented in field notes were relied upon (with the exception of a photography exercise participants were invited to complete during wave 3)⁶.

The studying of video footage in the process of analysis is much slower and more deliberate, as is the task of transcription. It does, nonetheless heighten the intensity of re-visiting the interview encounter enabling a richer focus on the minutiae. Analysing

⁶ Participants were invited to photograph and then talk about important places in their homes.

such visual material permits the researcher to notice aspects of the encounter that were 'lost' in the moment. For instance, siblings Jessie and Captain Underpants, from a middle-class, mixed ethnic background, chose to participate in an extended Skype interview for the latest wave of data collection. They had previously taken part in interviews in their own home, situated on the edge of a small city on the South Coast of England, with their elder sister Kelly⁷. As with each of the interviews I listened to and/or watched the encounters in the process of analysis. In earlier phases of the project I would have relied on analysing the verbatim transcripts. A remark recorded during the wave 2 interview highlights the lack of visual documentation and the conscious effort I made during discussions to provide commentary on action to ensure it was captured on the audio recording:

'I can't capture this on the recorder but the looks that Kelly is now getting (from Jessie)!'

Interspersing the interview with such observations has the potential to disrupt the flow of conversation and shape the resultant interaction. Recordings of the internet video and phone calls, however, enabled me to explore different aspects of the encounter, particularly the interaction dynamic in sibling group interviews. For example, the ways in which Jessie and Captain Underpants supported one another and worked together to produce a team performance during the interview became apparent. At the beginning, for example, they turned to one another and smiled before answering a question about their elder sister. Four minutes later they looked to one another when talking about their mother and then again after a further 90 seconds they smiled together when reflecting on past friendships. Observing their facial expressions even over this short space of time revealed much about the sibling dynamic and the way they sought to organise the interview interaction order communicating non-verbally who would respond to general questions about the family. A small turn of the head gestured the other to respond, a smile fostered rapport and a sense of connection between the two. It drew my attention to the occasions when I was invited to take part fully in the interaction when conversation and gestures were directed towards me, and when they engaged in private exchanges between the siblings. On studying the transcripts alone it would appear that Jessie often dominated the discussion. Observing non-verbal interaction revealed much about Captain Underpants' role in supporting and reaffirming his sister's responses. Although an overview detailing such could have been recorded in field notes the subtleties and nuances are likely to have been absent. Furthermore, such detail may not be consciously observed during the interview, only identified in the process of re-visiting the material for analysis.

In addition using internet video calls can intensify the focus of the interaction. During a physical co-present interview there is the opportunity to shift gaze, to observe the setting in detail and participants' body language in its entirety. In earlier waves Jessie and Captain Underpants had been sitting in different locations within their lounge. My gaze moved around the room as each took a turn to speak. During the completion of activities I was able to observe interaction between them, and to study the décor and artefacts within their home. In the Skype interview Jessie and Captain Underpants were

⁷ At the time of their fourth interview their elder sister was living in another city whilst studying. She took part in a phone interview at a later date.

sat at a table, which was supporting their laptop. They were both fairly close to the screen so I could see their head, shoulders and some of their torsos but not always their hand and arm movements (see also Cater 2011, Licoppe and Morel 2012, Janghorban et al. 2014, Seitz 2015). Jessie fidgeted a lot and I did not detect this in the moment but only when reviewing the video footage.

While as an alternative physical co-present interviews could be recorded. In light of participants' aforementioned remarks about 'pressure of presence' and the visibility of research props video cameras are likely to be viewed as even more intrusive (Jewitt 2012). The visual material that the recording of internet video calls provided changed the way I conceived of the analytic process. Engagement with auditory and visual material heightens the senses to other aspects of interaction that are often lost within translation of the interview into written word, such as interrupting or talking over one another, and where some aspects of interaction are not easily transposed, despite the best efforts of the transcriber. Indeed, in listening to the earlier interviews whilst simultaneously reading the transcripts it was apparent that some of the auditory nuances of the encounter were absent. These might often be considered banal or insignificant and, perhaps not deemed relevant to the substantive focus of those phases of the project. This type of analysis heightened my awareness of the role of the researcher in shaping the flow and focus of the interview. Often we concentrate on what the interviewee is saying, perhaps glossing over what we have said or the way in which we have spoken or posed a question. Again, by analysing text as opposed to audio or video this can be overlooked. The opportunity to look back longitudinally and methodologically has led me to question some of the current conventions surrounding the praxis of analysis in both qualitative and QLR research.

Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to assess whether internet video calls might be a viable alternative to physical co-present interviews for a long-established QLR study. I was interested in their use-value either as a means of conducting short 'catch-up' interviews between the main waves of data collection, or as an alternative way of carrying out case study intensive interviews. By focusing on the minutiae of interaction in physical co-present, internet video and audio-only interviews my awareness of some of the shortcomings of physical co-present interviews, commonly regarded as the 'gold standard' for qualitative researchers, has been heightened. Remote modes are not necessarily a second-rate or 'quick and easy' alternative.

By synthesising participant's own reflections on the shift in mode with an approach to analysis that draws on Goffman's interactionist conceptual tools it is apparent that no definitive mode emerged as favourable. Remote modes do offer convenience and flexibility welcomed by many participants who were leading busy or transient lives having started University or a new job, or living between the parental home and University, or residing in more precarious circumstances. Remote modes were for some, the only means by which they could continue to take part. They also had the potential to encourage re-engagement with the project amongst those who opted out of previous interviews.

QLR is increasingly understood as a sensibility and orientation rather than a specific research design (Thomson and McLeod 2015). This emphasis on the temporal is crucial

with modes that enable synchronous communication with visible co-presence having the potential to emulate the physical co-present interview. As Rettie (2009) argues drawing on the work of Garfinkel it is ‘...shared time, rather than physical co-presence, [that] is relevant to the experience of an occurrence *as a shared event*’ (p.426). That said, by comparing mediated modes that included both video and audio-only interactions it was the feeling of co-presence through a clear and sustained video connection that was most conducive to detailed disclosure. Indeed, the lack of ‘pressure of presence’ and the encroachment of the researcher on the personal territory of participants aided rapport and disclosure for many. There were, however, some shortcomings particularly the suitability of remote modes for the discussion of especially sensitive or traumatic subjects, the lack of opportunities to engage in a more sensory interview experience, and the effects of mode on the performances of the interlocutors.

The application of some of Goffman’s conceptual tools has been particularly illuminating. Although criticisms of his work centres on his own misgivings about the possibility of actually developing a universally applicable theory of face-to-face interaction and for over-emphasising the minutiae the theoretical importance of his analysis has been widely noted. As Manning (1992) stated ‘We can understand his work as a kind of map to the uncharted world of everyday life. Goffman saves us from overfamiliarity, allowing us to see the complexity, stability, and importance of apparently mundane social interaction’ (p. 4). In short, studying the minutiae of interaction across the different interview modes has been very revealing. Internet video calls can be technically challenging but if the audio and video quality are good and the researcher and participant are comfortable with the mode then they offer a degree of flexibility and informality that physical co-present interviews can lack.

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